

Erica Carley Harris  
Brunswick

Dear Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and members of the committee,  
My name is Erica Carley Harris, and I live in Brunswick. I am asking you today to support LD 1559.

The last time I testified in front of this committee in support of this bill, I was seven months pregnant with my son, Albion. I spoke about how differently I was approaching my planned leave, my second, since my employer had implemented a much more generous paid leave policy than when I gave birth to my daughter in 2016.

Just a few months later I gave birth and suffered a rare and life-threatening complication that led to emergency surgery an hour after my son was placed in my arms. I lost over a liter of blood, leading to a level of exhaustion, combined with the struggles of newborn care and PTSD from the birth, that left me unable to do much of anything other than lie on my couch and attempt to breastfeed. I tried, and failed to walk around my block a week after Albie's birth. My midwives told me to expect 6-8 weeks to feel relatively normal, and in my case it was closer to 10 before I was able to get back to a regular activity level.

It is unconscionable that birthing parents in a similar condition are forced back into the workforce days, not weeks, after giving birth. I have a desk job, but worked as a restaurant server for years in my teens and 20s. I imagine if I had been expected to carry a heavy tray of drinks 2 weeks after Albie's birth, I would have passed out. But I didn't have to do that. I was fortunate enough to have access to paid leave, and by the time I went back to work, I felt ready, even excited, and more importantly, supported. For too many new parents it is a question of physical and mental health, and financial necessity. LD 1559 would go a long way towards protecting vulnerable Mainers during a critical time.

I ask you to support LD 1559.

Thank you,  
Erica Carley Harris