



Maine Grocers &
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Friday, May 7, 2021

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST – LD 1559 ‘Resolve, To Create the Commission To Develop a Paid Family
and Medical Leave Benefits Program’

Dear Senator Hickman - Chair, Representative Sylvester - Chair, and Members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

My name is Christine Cummings and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association (MGFPA). The Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association is a business trade association representing Maine’s food community; Main Street businesses, including independently owned and operated grocery stores and supermarkets, food and beverage producers and processors, manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, and supportive service companies.

We appreciate the opportunity to evaluate a paid family and medical leave benefit program for Maine. A formal resolve will ensure that we do not move forward with a program prematurely, if at all. We recognize our neighboring states including Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island have enacted paid family and medical leave laws, it will be important to understand the challenges, ease and true feasibility of these programs. It may be of interest to the Commission to consider employers both Maine-based and those who have operations or experience with these programs already in effect. We also recommend that the study be considered in relation to the state’s 10-year strategic plan. We are pleased to see the detailed duties of the commission which include studying; the equity of the program, funding, partnerships and potential required technology, education and outreach requirements, program management, and how to address the state’s role alongside private program participants.

As a full-time, working mother of an 18-month-old and a 3.5-year-old, I know personally what it’s like to take two maternity leaves recently in Maine. It was a roller coaster; I felt the strain and void that I left on my small employer during my maternity leaves paired with and the pressure of returning 12 weeks later from unpaid leave. I saved my money, opted to reduce our family expenses and personally took responsibility for this financial change for my family. I am dedicated to my job and value and respect their financials and knew that paid leave was not an option in this role. It’s a challenging balance; the Commission is tasked with determining how to make a program feasible for employers *and* Maine residents who will participate in the program.

Determining the specifics of the coverage types, durations, compensation, job security and funding will be critical in this assessment. Also, of interest to the Commission should be whether or not paid family leave *or* paid medical leave proves to be more valuable to implement than the other or if they prove to be equally worthwhile. We support the Commission making recommendations to implement only if the study has proven the benefit program to be advantageous and economically viable.

It’s imperative to fully understand the costs of the program and comprehend the number of employees who will utilize the paid leave. What is the big picture impact on employers? We offer the support of our industries as needed by the Commission to study the implementation of a paid family and medical leave benefits program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Christine Cummings

Christine Cummings
Executive Director