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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

**Testimony of Speaker Ryan Fecteau
In Support of L.D. 1559
“Resolve, To Create the Commission To Develop a
Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program”
Friday, May 7, 2021**

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, I am Ryan Fecteau and I represent part of my hometown of Biddeford. I also have the distinct honor of serving as the Speaker of the Maine House. I’m submitting this testimony as a proud cosponsor of L.D. 1559, *Resolve, To Create the Commission To Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program*, sponsored by Senator Mattie Daughtry. This resolve ensures that the Maine State Legislature will have the information and data it needs to consider a paid family and medical leave policy that is tailor-made to suit Maine’s unique demographics, economy and culture.

In the United States, one-in-four women return to work within 10 days of giving birth, robbing them of the opportunity to fully bond with their newborn, compromising the mom and the baby’s health outcomes and ability to successfully establish breastfeeding, and ultimately discouraging that new parent from remaining in the workforce in the long-run. We all know that Maine faces a child care crisis, and the availability of daycares that provide care for *10-day-old infants* is practically non-existent in Maine. The lack of paid family leave sets the United States apart from the rest of the world — only joined by Papua New Guinea in failing to provide parental leave — and states have begun to take action to address this crisis. 10 states have now enacted paid family and medical leave laws, including our neighbors in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, recognizing that paid time away from work to bond with newborns and to care for ill family members pays dividends in terms of health outcomes, business stability and workforce retention.

Family values are Maine values, and we can all agree that no one should have to choose between receiving a paycheck and being there for their family in both the best of times, such as welcoming a newborn, and the hardest of times, like taking care of an elderly parent at the end of their life.

I do want to note that I have heard concern from the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation (DPFR) about the funding source of the bill, which is currently a transfer from the DPFR’s “Other Special Revenue Funds,” and urge the Committee to find another suitable funding source.

This resolve represents an important first step towards a policy that would result in greater stability for Maine’s businesses, improved health and economic outcomes for Maine children and families, and peace of mind for Maine seniors and new parents alike. I urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” on L.D. 1559.