

Thom Mauck
Topsham

Hello Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Housing:

My name is Thom Mauck. I am a Vietnam Era Air Force Veteran and a survivor of COVID-19 from Topsham, and I am here today in support of LD 1559, "Resolve to Create a Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program."

In mid-November 2020, I contracted a severe case of COVID-19. I knew my odds of survival were tenuous at best with underlying conditions. I was as ill as I have ever been, and I thought I might not survive. My doctor told me to shave my beard in order to be ready for intubation. Yet, miraculously, here I am, alive and having avoided hospitalization. However, I am plagued by long-term, residual COVID symptoms.

These symptoms aren't the only long-term effects of my illness. When I contracted COVID-19, I also lost my job of more than eight years because the company I worked for had no earned sick time or family and medical leave available to me when I got sick. After I left, I discovered I did not qualify for unemployment benefits and soon ran out of funds to pay my bills. I fell behind in my payments, and I'm worried I could soon lose my housing.

I thought my Vietnam Era military service would be the toughest challenge I would have to face. If someone had told me that when I reached 72 years of age I would be in this situation, I would not have believed it possible. Yet here I sit, seriously pondering an uncertain future, fearful and depressed.

I wholeheartedly support paid family and medical leave. Had that been available to me when I contracted COVID, I feel certain I would not be in such dire straits now. Maine's legislators have an opportunity to study the best ways to implement such a system here by passing LD 1559. My message to you today is to take care of the good people of Maine and ensure that we can come out of this pandemic with a stronger support system in place.

Thank you for your time and consideration.