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*Testimony of Rep. Rebecca Millett in support of*  
**LD 1559, Resolve, To Create the Commission To Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave**  
**Benefits Program**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing*

Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and esteemed members of the Committee on Labor and Housing. I am Representative Rebecca Millett and I represent House District 30, which is most of Cape Elizabeth. I am here in support of **LD 1559, Resolve, To Create the Commission To Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program.**

It is inevitable that almost everyone will have to take time away from work to care for a child, a family member who is sick, or to recover from a personal illness. Unlike nearly all other industrialized nations, the U.S. does not have national standards on *paid* family or sick leave, despite strong public support.

Workplace benefits are an extremely important part of balancing work, family and medical needs, yet only 15 percent of American workers have access to any sort of paid leave. For 198,000 Mainers, staying home to care for oneself or a loved one means losing out on pay. This is unacceptable, and we must do more to ensure that no Mainer has to choose between their health and their economic security.

I understand this Committee has considered several pieces of legislation this session that aim to address our growing workforce shortage. Maine will continue to compete with every other state to attract qualified workers and retain the workers who already live here unless we implement policies that make us more desirable. Fostering a supportive work environment would go a long way in incentivizing young people to relocate or choose to stay here. This, in-turn, supports our small businesses by reducing turnover costs and retaining their employees when they have to take time away. For example, new mothers who have access to paid leave are more likely to be back at work within 9-12 months than those who do not.

Finally, this bill creates a Commission that would invite critical voices to the table, including working Mainers, businesses, experts and caregivers, ensuring no one is left out. This legislation is an opportunity for collaboration and would provide the Maine government with a broad understanding of the real and direct impacts a paid family and medical leave policy would have.

As lawmakers, it is our duty to help improve the lives of our fellow Mainers. If we truly care about our workers, our families and our seniors, our policies ought to reflect that. A statewide paid leave policy would help grow our workforce, keep our families and communities healthy and benefit our businesses and economy. It's also what we owe our workers. They've earned it.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to take any questions.