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Testimony of Representative Amy Roeder 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 fellow members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Amy Roeder, and I represent House District 125, which includes part of Bangor. I am here today in support of **LD 1559, Resolve, To Create the Commission To Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program.**

In the summer of 2016, my husband and I became resource parents. The same day that we received our license, we got a call informing us that there were two boys awaiting placement and we would be meeting them the next week. The day of their visit, I snuck out of my office, afraid to tell anyone where I was going and why. The visit went well and the boys were placed with us a few days later. At the time, my husband worked for a company that granted him two weeks of paid leave and an additional six weeks of unpaid leave for the placement of a foster child. Had he been a birth parent, he would have received twelve paid weeks. I was earning significantly less than he was, then, at a job that didn't provide official paid time off. His leave was the only paid leave support we were guaranteed, and even still, it was not nearly enough. During this time, I didn't take more time off because I was afraid of losing my job. I later learned that was not an unfounded fear when my supervisor asked me if I thought I could still do my job now that I was a mother. This came after years of me putting in unpaid overtime.

My boys came to us with significant trauma-related challenges. Most of us don't know what it's like to be sent to live with strangers carrying all of our belongings in trash bags only to repeat the cycle every couple of months or years. I hate that the reason I couldn't spend more time helping them acclimate to their new home was because we couldn't afford it. Yes, I'm now the mom who once walked backwards to the bus stop holding a plate of scrambled eggs so my youngest could eat a hot breakfast while he was walking, but I lost so many of those early moments and I will never get them back. I'm not using hyperbole when I tell you that I would give anything to have

had just a few days with them when they first arrived. My sons are my whole heart and I can't help but feel that I failed them in those first few weeks.

In addition to protecting workers, paid leave is beneficial to employers. Employers who choose to offer paid leave enjoy higher worker retention in addition to higher worker morale and increased productivity, which reduces turnover costs. As our local businesses reopen and Mainers begin to return to the workforce, we have an opportunity to support a measure that would change our system of work for the better.

There was not a system of paid leave available to me when I needed it, and my husband's paid leave option was significantly less than ideal. Had it been available, I might still be working for that same employer today. We cannot continue to expect our constituents to forego their familial responsibilities. The choice between taking care of ourselves and our family members and a guaranteed paycheck is cruel and nonsensical.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.