

Elizabeth Small  
Windham

Senator Craig Hickman, Representative Mike Sylvester, and distinguished members of the Committee on Labor and Housing:

My name is Elizabeth Small, and I'm writing to urge your support of LD 1559: To Create the Commission To Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program; Sponsored by Senator Mattie Daughtry.

The pandemic put into stark relief the lack of protections families have to care for their family and maintain their jobs – but this was a problem long before we went into lockdown. Many families cannot take time off to care for their family without losing income unless an employer specifically provides it. As the mom of a child with disabilities, I know firsthand how truly detrimental this is.

My daughter Madilynne has Down Syndrome and is dependent on a pacemaker. She also requires half a liter of oxygen at night and is non-verbal. Between cardiologists, genetic and behavioral pediatricians, pulmonologists, ENT, hearing and eye specialists, our lives revolve around these appointments to take care of our daughter.

We have in-home support for Maddi four afternoons a week, which helps immensely. We also live with my parents, which offsets the costs and gives our family extra support. However, when Maddi gets sick, it's not the same for her as other children. She loses weeks of school, which means someone needs to be with her.

Originally, my husband and I worked opposite schedules for a while, until he lost his job. He has been home with Maddi ever since and is Maddi's primary caregiver. At this point, it feels nearly impossible for my husband to go back to work.

So many families across this state face this struggle every day. We are lucky to have the support system we do; many others are not. Whether you are raising a child with disabilities or taking care of a dying parent, you should be able to take time off of work without losing a paycheck or your job entirely.

Paid Family & Medical Leave would keep working families healthy, happy, and employed, which is a boost for our communities and our economy, too. I urge you to support LD 1559.

Thank you,  
Elizabeth Small