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TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 999

AN ACT TO SUPPORT FAMILY CAREGIVERS BY EXPANDING FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing. I am Steven Bailey, executive director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association, in opposition to L.D. 999.

Superintendents are well aware of situations where grandparents or great-grandparents are living with or being cared for by one of our school employees and believe that is a situation that is becoming more prevalent. We try to be flexible, but our first obligation is to our students.

This bill would take the decision on whether to grant leave out of our hands and allow staff to take Family Medical Leave to care for non-parent caregivers. It includes in that list grandparents, great-grandparents and others with a serious health risk who are related to the employee by “blood, adoption, legal custody, marriage or domestic partnership.”

We believe that goes too far and could result in an unpredictable number of teachers being absent so they can do caretaking at home.

Caretaking for those in need is laudable, but it should not come at the cost of having our teachers absent from the classroom. Leave can and is requested today in our districts, and is approved on a case-by-case basis. It is a local decision and should not be legislated.