



Maine Education Association

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Testimony

In Support

LD 999: An Act to Support Family Caregivers by Expanding Family Medical Leave

Rachelle Bristol – Executive Director, Maine Education Association

Before the Labor and Housing Committee

March 30, 2023

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and other esteemed members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

My name is Rachelle Bristol, and I serve as the MEA Executive Director. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Maine Education Association in support of LD 999, An Act to Support Family Caregivers by Expanding Family Medical Leave. The MEA represents 24,000 educators in Maine, including educators in nearly every public school in the state and the faculty and other professionals who work in our University of Maine and Community College systems.

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly heightened the need for working people to have access to leave programs. Foundational programs such as the Family and Medical Leave Act provide basic safety nets for times when we need to care for a family member or an extended family member who may be ill. We know in Maine, and across the country, there are more extended family relationships which cause individuals to care for others in their lives. More grandchildren are helping to care for grandparents and great-grandparents. There are more family situations that are not traditional but no less deserving of the rights to care for someone they care about. It would only make sense to extend the basic FMLA provisions to more familial relationships, including the real-life relationships and bonds we create.

LD 999 does two things. First it expands FMLA protections to grandparents and great-grandparents. This will help more working people have access to protected leave while caring for these two very special groups of people. In addition, LD 999 extends the relationships protected under FMLA “whether related to the employee by blood, adoption, legal custody, marriage or domestic partnership.” This language more accurately reflects current family structures and is more inclusive of the variety of familial relationships that exist in the state of Maine. Acknowledging and supporting those relationships is essential.

Thank you for your time, and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can answer any questions.

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