

Joe Anderson, DO, FAAP
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May 25, 2023

Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Joe Anderson. I am a resident of Portland, a hospital-based pediatrician in Lewiston, and I sit on the Board of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Dr. Laura Blaisdell has submitted testimony on behalf of the Maine AAP in support of LD 1964: An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program. I would like to voice my strong personal support as well and urge you to vote ought to pass to establish this important and valuable program. As both a dedicated pediatrician and a prospective adoptive parent, I hope to convey the pressing need for such a program to ensure the well-being of families during critical life events.

As a pediatrician, I have had the privilege of caring for numerous families throughout my career. Time and time again, I have witnessed the challenges faced by parents who are forced to make difficult choices between providing necessary care for their children and maintaining financial stability. The absence of a paid family medical leave program puts families in an untenable position, often leading to prolonged separations during crucial moments of a child's life.

The first few months of a child's life are of utmost importance for their development, and the presence of a nurturing caregiver during this period greatly influences their future well-being. However, without a paid family medical leave program, many parents are forced to return to work shortly after their child is born, resulting in increased stress and decreased bonding opportunities. This not only affects the parent-child relationship but also hampers the child's overall health and development.

Furthermore, as a prospective adoptive parent, I have an acute understanding of the significant financial burdens and emotional stress many families experience due to the lack of paid leave options. Adoption is a beautiful yet complex journey that demands time, patience, and emotional stability. The absence of a comprehensive paid family medical leave program forces adoptive parents to navigate the adoption process while juggling work responsibilities, often to the detriment of their well-being and that of the child they are bringing into their family. As a physician, I have the resources available to be able to take unpaid time off when we are lucky enough to bring home our future child, but this is not a reality for most families.

Studies have consistently shown that paid family medical leave programs lead to positive outcomes for both parents and children. It promotes healthier families, increases employee

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satisfaction and productivity, and reduces the need for costly public assistance programs. By implementing such a program, Maine would join a growing number of forward-thinking states that prioritize the well-being of families and recognize the fundamental importance of nurturing caregivers during critical life events.

I urge you to support the proposed legislation for a paid family medical leave program in Maine. By doing so, you will be championing the well-being of families, ensuring a brighter future for our children, and strengthening the fabric of our communities. I believe that this program aligns with our shared values of compassion, fairness, and the recognition that investing in families is an investment in our collective future.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I have faith in your leadership and commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of Maine's families. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or if I can provide further information to support the passage of this crucial legislation.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Anderson" followed by a stylized flourish.

Joe Anderson, DO, FAAP

Pediatric Hospitalist

Co-Chair, Advocacy Committee, Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics