

Leigh Bermani  
Hollis Center  
LD 1964

I am submitting this testimony in favor of paid family and medical leave.

My baby was born in June 2022. Both my husband and I are educators. People often think that we have the summers “off,” but in fact our employment contracts are for 181 days. Since our baby was born in the summer, after we had finished our contracts for the year, my husband was given no family leave to use in the fall. Fortunately, my district does offer 30 days of paid parental leave that can be used within the first six months “to care for and bond with a newborn or a newly adopted child.” I then took an additional 14 unpaid days. I am very grateful to have had this time with my son, but I wish that my husband had been provided the same opportunity, and I wish that my time home with my baby had been longer.

I truly believe that having to send my baby to daycare in order to return to work and maintain our health insurance exacerbated my post-partum depression (and this is backed by research: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8fztft>). Both my husband and I looked at our baby boy when he was six weeks old and thought that in no way would we ever have been able to leave him at that time. If we had each been eligible for 12 weeks of paid leave, it would have felt so much better to have had him at home for 24 weeks rather than start daycare at 4 months (and I fully appreciate that we are “lucky” compared to so many families).

I understand that a program of paid family and medical leave comes with costs and difficulties, but I am also aware that PFML is supported by a majority of Mainers, decreases turnover costs for small businesses, and helps to stabilize the workforce crisis. Other states have strong PFML programs in place, and it makes those states more appealing to young families. Maine, which has a rapidly aging population, would benefit from attracting more young families to the state and to the workforce. I urge the Legislature to move forward with a plan for PFML in Maine.

Respectfully,  
Leigh Bermani  
Hollis Center