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LD 1964

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and esteemed members of the Labor and Housing Committee. I'm Amanda Berry, a family nurse practitioner from Stratton, here to testify in support of LD 1964 and a Paid Family & Medical Leave program.

In my professional life, I treat folks with opiate-use disorder. They face a lot of hurdles. And many of them also care for elderly parents or sick children. The consequences of not having guaranteed paid family leave for them are extreme. Many are forced to quit their jobs to both get and give care; this derails their life. These folks often lose everything they've worked for—not just their job, but also their homes, their cars, their security. I had one patient tell me, "I'm giving up. I have to go back to prison. It's the only way I can get housing and food." That's how rough they have it.

Lack of paid family leave does not just affect my patients—it touches all of us. I am no exception. Last August, my husband was diagnosed with cancer. We had to drop everything and go to Boston for treatment and surgery. I'm privileged to have a good job, health insurance, and paid time off. Yet it wasn't enough when this crisis hit. Thankfully, my generous coworkers donated their paid time off, so that I could focus on my husband's health. If my colleagues hadn't stepped in to give what time they had, I don't know how we would've done it.

Imagine how different things would've been if we had paid family leave. I'm lucky I had resources and support in a crisis; even with that, paid family leave would have made a difference. But what about the Mainers who don't have those resources? Many of my patients are socially and physically isolated. They don't have that kind of support. They're hanging on by a thread.

Everybody gets sick. Everybody has family members who require care. We need to take time to help our families—and ourselves—without fear of risking our livelihoods. If paid family leave were to pass, people wouldn't have to sacrifice their jobs to care for ailing loved ones. Paid family leave would make our workforce stronger, more stable, more humane. This policy would change not just our economy, but our communities for the better. It's past time to pass this bill. Thank you.