

Maine Chapter

INCORPORATED IN MAINE

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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Testimony In Support of LD 1964, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program

May 25, 2023

Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is Dr. Laura Blaisdell and I live in South Portland. I am testifying in support of paid family and medical leave for Maine in my role of as the current President of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Maine children and families need policies like paid leave offering time to bond, establish feeding and recover from the birthing process. With access to 12 weeks of paid leave, infants are [more likely](#) to attend checkups and get immunized and are breastfed twice as long by parents who choose to. Paid leave [decreases postpartum depression](#) and promotes shared child care responsibilities.

Personally, I returned to work within one month of the birth of both my sons for lack of extended leave policies. As a pediatrician, I knew the benefits of kangaroo care and singing, talking and reading to newborns and was fortunate to have job protection. However, many families are vulnerable to the adverse impacts of unpaid leave. [Ninety-five percent](#) of low-wage workers can't access paid leave, so unexpected illness or injury could mean lost income, employment and health insurance. Paid family and medical leave promotes health equity and offers all Mainers a safety net to recover without slipping into unemployment or poverty.

Mainer's have long lived by the sagacious adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Allowing families to care for one another in times of need is not only common sense, but is worth every downstream benefit—both proven and obvious. As pediatricians our professional belief in and dedication to are ounces of prevention, like paid leave.

It is baffling that we as a country had not addressed this critical issue facing families, yet it isn't confusing at all why Maine's forward-thinking leadership would join the growing number of states supporting paid leave.

Supporting LD 1964 will require consideration of the benefits and costs—both the ones we pay now and the ones we will pay later. In Maine, we live by *Dirigo!* and in so doing I hope you will support 1964.

Sincerely,

Laura Blaisdell MD/MPH, FAAP

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