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Wells
LD 1964

I ask that you support small businesses, the backbone of our economy, by opposing a paid leave mandate. As a small business owner who provides jobs to the people of Maine, I simply cannot afford this costly and burdensome legislation.

In a pandemic-recovering, inflation-stricken environment and facing a worker shortage crisis, I work hard to create jobs and opportunity, support the community, and take care of my employees. Some people like to say that mandating paid leave is being family focused, but what they fail to realize is that our small business is like a family. We already work with our employees to provide leave and time off because we value them. A paid leave mandate and its rules will only decrease flexibility to meet my employees' needs.

It is hard enough to find any workers, let alone qualified employees. This legislation will only amplify that struggle by allowing employees to be gone for months and knowing they have a job guaranteed for them. How can I be expected to find willing, qualified, temporary employees? What will this do to other workers who may risk getting burned out? And what happens if a person on leave for 3 to 4 months decides in the end not to come back?

The overall annual cost of payroll taxes to finance the proposed program is estimated to ultimately cost over \$400 million a year. This is much larger than unemployment taxes and exceeds workers compensation premiums, making a paid leave mandate law the largest and most expensive employee benefit entitlement program in Maine. Furthermore, to date, only 11 states have a paid leave law, yet the proposal in Augusta would be among the most generous of those states, also making Maine the most geographically isolated state with such a law.

I simply cannot afford a paid family leave mandate. This legislation would increase the difficulty and cost of staffing my business, lead to higher costs and reduced services for customers, and make my business more vulnerable to larger companies that have greater staff flexibility.

I urge you to please oppose this ill-designed and unaffordable legislation. Keep small businesses in Maine strong - oppose the paid leave mandate.

Thank you for your consideration.