

Emma Cooper
Portland
LD 1964

Remarks of Emma Cooper, BSN, RN

LD 1964: An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program

May 25, 2023

Augusta, Maine

Good afternoon Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Emma Cooper, I live in Portland and I am a registered nurse.

As a nurse, I have worked in end of life care as well as labor and delivery and now, postpartum. I am well aware of the complexities of care needed at both junctures of life. I have also helped care for family and community members who are struggling to bridge gaps. This caring work takes grit and deep searching for strength. I am not unique. I am like so many other Mainers. We are sturdy and giving of ourselves here in this state. We should be proud of it.

In my current work as a postpartum nurse, I often care for patients who have little to no paid parental leave. Most often this applies to the non-birthing, or support parent, but I frequently have birthing parents who have little paid parental leave as well. This lack of time that new parents and their babies have to bond is devastating for all involved and cruel. My own hospital took away paid leaves for only nurses, without notice, as retaliation for forming our union. We nurses then fought hard for those paid leaves to be returned and were successful. I never again want to be placed in a position where paid leave is being used as ransom for my right to organize and advocate for myself. How are young people supposed to feel secure in starting families here in Maine?

Personally, I feel I cannot have a child in this country. When I look around at my fellow Mainers and watch them struggle between caring for children and caring for their aging parents I want no part of it. With the way things are, I know that I will feel I am doing neither role justice. I will not be the mother I know I could be, if supported, nor the daughter I know I am. Having legislation like LD 1964 will only bring young people to Maine and encourage young Mainers like me to stay here and to feel supported in having a family.

I am so proud to be a Mainer. Maine is a state that cares, full of incredible people. I want our state to continue to be a leading beacon when it comes to equality. Passing Paid Family and Medical Leave is an excellent way to continue to do that. Please vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1964.