

Michelle Corry  
Petite Jacqueline, Portland  
LD 1964

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

Michelle Corry  
Portland, vMaine  
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Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is Michelle Corry and I live in Scarborough, however I run businesses in Portland and Brunswick. I have been operating award-winning restaurants in Maine for 20 years. I have also worked as a waitress for over 15 years, many of those being in Maine, before we opened our businesses- five fifty-five and Petite Jacqueline. We are 100 percent family run and have always strived to establish a positive and professional work environment with a focus on teaching and offering well being benefits above the industry norm, while at the same time creating a memorable "Maine" experience for our guests.

I am here today to oppose the Sponsor's amendment LD 1964, "An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program." This proposal costs, not only small businesses but it is another employee tax without their consent.

Please remember that key word-small businesses. Most of Maine businesses are literally "mom and pops". And the continued added expenses of non-optional benefit programs such as 401k, EPL, salary threshold minimums, minimum wage increases, and raising food costs are making it unsustainable to be a small business in Maine. If we are not careful, we will only have chain restaurants left in this state.

When you go out to eat now, I am sure you often remark on how expensive it is and think, "this is ridiculous," and yet, I cannot and do not charge anywhere near what I should to recoup these increasing costs.

Right now my small business is trying to focus on things like mental health wellness for my staff. We are looking at a program that will allow for free mental health visits for all of the staff, which includes addiction and stress issues. However, if we incur further costs with bills such as these, we won't be able to even consider it.

Please keep in mind, to impose a tax on the workers in order to pay for something they may not want, or need, is not necessarily helping them. As it is now, I offer health insurance, dental and 401k match and very few of my staff opt for these benefits as they would rather have the money now to help with rent and rising food costs. Additionally, they feel sufficiently covered between unemployment, workers compensation, and the Maine EPL. I urge you to, at the very least, reconsider the definition of "small business". We could protect our small businesses and workers at the same time if we look at this threshold differently. Many states consider a business small, if under 500 employees NOT 50(50 employees is 2 small restaurants).

Finally, I would ask you all to re-access some of the wording in this bill, for example, the fact that employees only have to work 6 weeks before being eligible seems excessive and incongruent to the 3 months it will pay. I feel there is room to rework the bill to make it more approachable than as it is now. Once again, we are creating legislature that is more aggressive than any in the country, and asking the employers and employees of Maine to compare themselves to cities as large as San Francisco and Seattle.

Please vote LD 1964 ought not to pass. As crafted this proposal would likely cause harm to Maine businesses and the greater economy. Thank you, and I'd be pleased to answer any questions.

Sincerely,  
Michelle and Steve Corry,  
Petite Jacqueline, Portland, Maine  
Five fifty-five North, Brunswick, Maine