

Dear members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

My name is Natalie Emmerson. I am a current senior at Morse High School and I am writing to express my support for Paid Family and Medical Leave.

Currently, the United States is one of the few developed countries that does not offer Paid Family and Medical Leave to workers. When workers need to take time off to care for a new child, recover from a serious illness, or tend to a family member's health, they often face significant financial strain or are forced to quit their jobs altogether.

Although I have not experienced this strain personally, I have seen its effects on classmates throughout my time in public education. Two years ago a student at Morse was in an accident that left them paralyzed from the waist down. In order to receive the care needed to save her life, her mom was forced to quit her job, requiring the family to start a Go Fund Me campaign and fundraise throughout the community in order to pay for her treatment. I have seen other classmates struggle with food and housing security due to younger siblings who have been hospitalized for long periods of time and families who struggle with the additional expenses of unplanned children.

Paid Family and Medical Leave can help alleviate the problems faced by families in my community and citizens of Maine as a whole by providing workers with the financial support they need to take time off without risking their jobs or financial security. This can help improve the health and well-being of workers and their families, as well as lead to higher employee retention rates and improved recruitment efforts.

Furthermore, Paid Family and Medical Leave can also help reduce healthcare costs and improve public health outcomes. By allowing workers to take time off to care for themselves or their loved ones, it can help prevent serious illnesses and injuries from becoming more severe and costly to treat. This, in turn, can help reduce the burden on the healthcare system and improve health outcomes for all Mainers.

Sincerely,

Natalie Emmerson