

Malvina Gregory
Portland
LD 1964

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

Malvina Gregory
Portland, Maine
May 25, 2023

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

I submit my 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."

When my daughter was born my husband returned to work just four days later. I had no leave, and someone needed to earn income for the family. I was alone, with few supports to care for our newborn child. She developed colic and for the next four months I struggled alone to care for her. It was overwhelming. As a result, I slipped into a postpartum depression that very nearly took my life. So many mothers have stories like mine. We all deserve better.

Both my parents are octagenarians and this year they both had strokes for the first time. Thankfully, they recovered. Nonetheless, age waits for no one. I wait for the other shoe to drop, for the crisis that might come which will make me need to drop everything to care for them. What about those children who have to make the choice between making the rent payment and caring for their parents? What an awful choice.

This past week there was a sewage leak at my daughter's school and the emergency school cancelation went out to all the parents at 7:30am. I had the privilege of rearranging my morning at work so that I could stay home with her. I did it because my husband couldn't. He works as a subcontracted janitor and there is no paid time off. For him, missed hours mean a black mark and a loss of income.

Not one of these stories is unique to my family. We are lucky to have resources, savings, and one family member with PTO. With that, we get through. There are so many other families where each one of these very common situations that I described would mean risking household instability. No one should have to choose between caring for loved ones and food or housing. No one is a good worker when you're trying to ignore the rising panic that your loved one isn't getting the care they need. Paid family and medical leave would make workers, families, businesses — and our whole economy — stronger and healthier.

A Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program is public policy that ensures economic stability for Mainers. It is the humane thing to do for all our families. I urge you to establish a public family and medical leave insurance plan, administered by and for the public. Maine has a core value that we care for our neighbors. You have a chance today to do just that. I urge you to support and strengthen LD 1964.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Malvina Gregory