

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Peggy Haynes, I live in Freeport, and I am pleased to submit 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.

Paid Family and Medical leave is personal for my family. The arrival of our two adopted sons into our world came without paid leave for my husband and I. The issue with adoption, at the time, was it didn't qualify for medical leave. Only pregnancy was considered a medical leave. It has now evolved to family leave, including parental leave, but it's always been unpaid.

This is an exciting time in someone's life, and it shouldn't have to be overshadowed with worries as to how you're going to pay the bills. One of the most important pieces of this legislation for my family is the inclusion of adopted children. Our family would've greatly benefited from legislation like this being in place when my husband and I were raising our two sons.

All we hear these days from pundits and the business lobby is there is a workforce shortage and we're in a tight labor market. By providing Paid Family and Medical Leave, Maine businesses can attract more workers and gain a competitive edge regionally and nationally. Some of Maine's largest employers, such as Unum and WEX, offer paid leave programs and they work. If we are going to be successful in our goals to keep our youth in Maine to live, work, and raise a family, we need policies in place that benefit workers and their families, policies like LD 1964.

I am grateful to Sen. Daughtry, my state senator, and Rep. Cloutier, for their leadership on this incredibly important issue, and for building a broad coalition of support across Maine. They've taken the time to listen to business owners, community leaders, employees, and other stakeholders to hear how this legislation would impact them. Responding to the needs of constituents is the job of the legislature, and they have done just that.

I thank this committee for allowing me to share my thoughts and I urge you to vote ought-to-pass on LD 1964. Thank you.