

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

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is Karen Heck and I live in Waterville. I am testifying in support of paid family and medical leave for Maine.

January, 15th 2015 my husband had routine surgery to remove his cancerous tonsil. At the end of the procedure, he had a non-routine event that landed him in the ICU for 7 days, and for another seven days upstairs in a hospital bed. It wasn't clear that he would fully recover, much less live. As anyone who has been in the hospital knows whether it's life-threatening or not, it is important to have a patient advocate and that can be a full-time job.

Fortunately, my job provided up to 6 weeks of paid family leave. Every day of that leave was spent monitoring his care to be sure what was ordered was actually provided, advocating for him when it wasn't, arranging for medical equipment, and making sure he was taking medications, cleaning feeding tubes and myriad other tasks to be sure he was on the road to full recovery.

We were fortunate. He recovered within 4 months and I was able to help make that happen without having to worry about whether we would have any income to help with the costs of his care nor about whether I would have a job at the end of the 6 weeks I spent caring for him.

While there will be the predictable arguments by large employers that this legislation will be bad for business I would suggest that they consider happier, healthier employees an asset and treat them as such. Research provided by the Financial Health Network [“Unpaid and Unprotected: How the Lack of Paid Leave for Medical and Caregiving Purposes Impacts Financial Health.”](#) has found that “Having access to paid leave for medical or caregiving purposes is correlated with less financial stress, better financial health, and higher job satisfaction.” and having employees stay at home when they are sick rather than come into work can protect others in the workplace.

LD 1964 would provide the kind of assistance my husband and I were able to access to thousands of hard-working Mainers who deserve the chance to care for themselves and other family members without having to worry about losing their jobs to do so.

I hope you will support LD 1964. Thank you for listening,