

Kate Hitchings Ahalt
Bath
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

Kate Hitchings Ahalt
Bath, Maine
May 25, 2023

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

My name is Kate Hitchings Ahalt and I live in Bath, Maine. I am testifying in support of paid family and medical leave for Maine.

I am one of so many Mainers who are trying their utmost to contribute to society and our economy via a full-time career and at the same time to raise and support a healthy family. In my household, both parents work demanding jobs, and we have two kids. We care deeply about both our jobs AND our family; and one of the hardest things as a parent is finding paid time off of work to have a child, recover from having a child, or perform a host of other critical parental functions that our society values - in theory. To me, it's time for Maine to signal that it values our ability to perform those functions in practice by providing Paid Family Medical Leave to all Mainers. It just makes sense.

When I had each of my children, I was lucky enough to have access to nearly four months of paid medical leave from my employer, allowing me to recover from childbirth, bond with my babies, and return to being a productive worker largely healed- but that kind of critical, stability-providing leave is far from accessible for all women. Without PFML, women leave the workforce at astonishing rates, in large part to provide unpaid care to their families as access to quality care has become more and more scarce throughout our state- and nationwide. Put simply, if we don't have paid leave from work, our choices as parents narrow considerably- either drop out of the workforce completely for some time, take unpaid leave (if even available to you) and imperil your family's financial position, or return to work immediately while you search desperately for infant care. None of these options are good for women, their families, or, long term, for their employers.

I implore the state of Maine to take a stand and to make an investment in women's equality of opportunity by supporting LD 1964. Thank you for your time and consideration on this important issue.

Sincerely,
Kate Hitchings Ahalt