

Roxanne Kai
Woodstock, Maine People's Alliance
LD 1964

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Labor and Housing Committee: My name is Roxy Kai and I live in Woodstock. I am here today in support of LD 1964, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program.

Last year I collected signatures for Paid Family and Medical Leave with the Maine People's Alliance. I personally collected signatures of and spoke with more than 200 Mainers in Oxford County alone.

I spent days collecting signatures for PFML because it is personal for me. I have multiple chronic health conditions, including a condition called diastasis recti. This condition makes me prone to getting hernias. I currently have two unfixed hernias, and one hernia that needed to be fixed this past April that having PFML would have been a game changer for. I couldn't be on my feet more than 5 minutes without it prolapsing and needing to be pushed back in by myself or by the ER if I couldn't do it myself. It caused severe pain and was at risk of getting strangulated. For a little more than a month leading up to the date of my surgery, I was completely out of commission. After the surgery I had to expect a 6 week recovery time period, which took my body closer to 8 weeks due to my health conditions. In all, I was unable to function for almost 3 months.

I was without a job, and my husband who needed to help care for me, had to take unpaid days off both prior to the surgery and the recovery time afterwards, so we were living off of his minimal paycheck, and it put us way behind on bills. On top of this I have a 10 year old daughter with her own health conditions - PFML could have taken the stress off my family, as my husband would have been able to take paid time off to take care of me and my daughter, instead of being stressed to the max trying to make ends meet. Traveling to doctors appointments, ER trips, and my overall recovery would have been much easier without this additional stress.

When I was collecting signatures, I talked to Mainers from all over the political spectrum who shared their powerful stories. People told me about how PFML would have been a game changer for them like it would have been for me. These stories need to be heard, so if you're looking for a reason why PFML needs to be invested in, go spend some time in your community talking to people, asking them their story and genuinely listening to them with an open heart and open mind, and you'll hear that the PFML is least you could invest in to help Mainers.

Thank you for your time.