

Amy Jane Larkin  
Arundel

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing: my name is Amy Larkin, I am a resident of Arundel and I am here today to testify strongly in favor of LD 1964.

I am one of Maine's many family caregivers. My grandmother Eva lived on her own for a few years after my mother died, but my husband and I moved in to help care for her after a very snowy winter and a minor stroke required a lot of overnights and extra trips up from Kittery. We've been living together for five years now, and Eva turned 100 last June. We are grateful to share this time together, but illnesses and injuries regularly pop up that mean I can't work.

After a long day of celebrating her 100th birthday, Eva tried taking her shoes off, lost her balance, fell, and broke her hip just past midnight. After several days in the emergency department awaiting surgery, Eva's hip was repaired and she was soon transferred to a rehab hospital in Portland. Because she's such an active woman, her acute rehab stay lasted only 11 days before she returned home. Those first three weeks were particularly tough for us because she was in a lot of pain and needed help doing things like getting dressed, getting in and out of bed, bathing, prepping each meal, taking all her medications including a few new ones, and preparing and applying ice packs.

We were lucky to have physical therapists come to our house, but due to staffing shortages, there were no nurse's aides available. Medicare would have covered an aide who could help with bathing and other daily tasks, but I had to fill that role. After a month or so, I considered myself fortunate that she only needed me for 6-8 hours per day including running errands and getting her to appointments. When I wasn't helping, I was exhausted and my husband and I had to take turns leaving the house or find friends who could give us a break for a few hours. I work for myself as an illustrator and because I'm self-employed I didn't need permission to take time off. But it took two months to start working even just a few hours a week and I had to turn down jobs.

I lost income and feared losing clients. These are both scary things anytime, but especially when you're overtired and wondering when things will be different. I am here today because I know that everyone I know will have an experience like mine at some point in their life. Each of us will need to take time off work to care for ourselves or someone we love. And when we do so, we should not be afraid. We should be able to focus on our grandmothers, our new babies, our spouses, our siblings and ourselves. We need a strong Paid Family & Medical Leave System here in Maine, and I urge you to vote in favor of LD 1964. Thank you for listening and for your time.

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