

EILEEN PEW
EAST ANDOVER
LD 1964

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing: My name is Eileen Pew and I live in East Andover. I write 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.

I am a retired educator - I taught in the Maine public school system for nearly thirty years. My husband, who is also retired, was a self-employed small business owner. When my children were young, I had back surgery because I had a slipped disc.

Before I had the surgery and while I was recovering, I was unable to work. I had to take a leave of absence. I'd wake up in the morning and my legs and back would hurt. It would take an hour of walking around in the morning to feel "normal". I couldn't tie my shoes or easily dress myself. I remember my kids helping me get ready for the day when my husband wasn't home. I couldn't drive.

As I did not have access to a paid leave program, I had to use my sick days. I had enough sick days accrued to cover the time off I needed. But I've been in situations where I haven't had enough sick days. When I had my second child, I used up all of my accrued sick leave. I had to take unpaid time off during my maternity leave to bond with my child. This created a burden on my growing family, not having the income from my job.

I was able to return to my teaching position towards the end of the school year and kept my job. This is a key part of accessing leave: being able to return to the job. Knowing that my job was still going to be there created a sense of security that so many workers go without day after day. We need to make sure that when a PFML law goes into place, that there are strong protections for workers so they feel confident in accessing leave. Please make sure this is part of the bill.

For workers like me, for people who need to get surgery, for parents who want to expand their family, please pass a strong Paid Family and Medical Leave bill.

Thank you.