

Samantha Paradis
Caribou, ME
LD 1964

Samantha Paradis (they/them)

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and esteemed members of the Labor and Housing Committee, my name is Samantha Paradis, and I'm here to testify in support of LD 1964 and a Paid Family & Medical Leave program.

I'm a life-long Mainer. I grew up in Frenchville and went to the University of Maine. I've worked in healthcare for 17 years and am a family nurse practitioner, specializing in addiction medicine. I was also the mayor of Belfast from 2017 to 2019.

I believe that paid family leave is a benefit anybody who works should be able to access. Many of the folks I treat work in service jobs. They make beds at hotels, work on farms, lobster on the coast. They essentially run Maine's economy. Without their service, Maine's economy wouldn't function. They are less likely to be able to access paid family leave and face loss of income, loss of their job, difficult choices, and even health consequences when they consider taking time off to care for a family member.

The people I care for, and every person, need to take time off to care for themselves or others. Without Paid Family Leave, many can't afford to risk their paycheck to get the care needed. Some even end up leaving their jobs because they can't get the healthcare they need. Not allowing for Paid Family Leave is an injustice. It not only affects the folks leaving their jobs; it affects us all. This creates a culture that values work over caregiving when, in reality, all we've got is each other.

This is something that has affected me personally, too. I was a foster parent for three years. Because I didn't have paid leave at the time, I had to choose between unpaid leave and exhausting all my vacation time when I had children placed with me in order to ensure they were stable and settled in our home. I now work for a different employer and now have access to paid leave. This would have made such a difference in my life then, and it does now. It feels like such a relief. It feels like my humanity is respected.

I cannot understate the importance of Paid Family & Medical Leave. In respecting our humanity as individuals, this program is invaluable—for our mental health, physical health, and overall well-being. It is time to pass and fund paid leave for all Maine workers - because care can't wait. Thank you.