

Committee on Labor and Housing Committee
Sen. Senator Tipping, Senate Chair
Rep. Roeder, House Chair

Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Labor and Housing Committee.

The American Heart Association (AHA) is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke, whose mission is to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We are writing in support of **LD 1964 "An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program"**. We support policies that increase access to job-protected paid family & medical leave that can be used for cardiovascular treatments, survivorship care, and caregiving. The need for access to paid medical & family leave became clearer nationwide during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The availability of paid family and medical leave for people with and caring for individuals who have a serious illness or health condition is vital, as treatment for and recovery from serious illnesses and conditions are often difficult and time consuming. The flexibility to balance treatment and employment is essential for patients and caregivers. Not all patients or caregivers have access to paid family and medical leave, and without it they risk financial hardship or not getting the care they or their loved ones need.

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Our organization has long fought to ensure that patients have access to care to treat their serious illnesses and health conditions. Being able to take time off work is fundamentally an access to care issue, and our current patchwork system of paid and unpaid leave forces some patients and caregivers to choose between treating their illness and keeping their job or having enough income to survive – while also exacerbating health inequities. For these reasons we urge you to vote "ought to pass" on **LD#1964**. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about this testimony.

Sincerely
Allyson Perron Drag
American Heart Association/ Stroke Association
Government Relations Director