



53 Baxter Boulevard, Suite 202 | Portland, ME 04101
Phone: 866-554-5380 | Fax: 207-775-5727 | TTY: 877-434-7598
aarp.org/me | me@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpmaine
facebook.com/aarpmaine | instagram.com/aarpme

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Testimony in Favor of LD 1964 – An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program

Greetings, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Bridget Quinn. I am an Associate State Director of Advocacy and Outreach for AARP Maine.

AARP is the nation’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. On behalf of our nearly 200,000 members statewide, thank you for the opportunity to share testimony. Today, we are providing testimony in emphatic support of LD 1964 – An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program.

I would like to bring your attention to a critical workforce in Maine who often go unrecognized and would benefit from a Paid Family and Medical Leave program: Maine’s family caregivers. In Maine, 166,000 unpaid family caregivers provide 155 million hours of unpaid family care.¹

Many of these caregivers work full- or part-time jobs while supporting their loved ones. Nationally 61% of family caregivers of adults worked either full-time or part-time in 2019.² Many working caregivers have reported experiencing emotional stress caused by balancing caregiving and work. Family caregivers who do not have workplace benefits such as paid time off are at risk of experiencing heightened financial and emotional strain. Studies have found that nationally, among family caregivers who work:

- 19% quit their job
- 44% reduced their hours³

LD 1964 will support family caregivers who work to better balance their job and family responsibilities, reducing their stress and allowing them to better support their loved ones.

¹ Reinhard, Susan C., Selena Caldera, Ari Houser, and Rita B. Choula. *Valuing the Invaluable 2023 Update: Strengthening Supports for Family Caregivers*. Washington, DC: AARP Public Policy Institute. March 8, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.26419/ppi.00082.006>

² Reinhard, Susan C., Selena Caldera, Ari Houser, and Rita B. Choula. *Valuing the Invaluable 2023 Update: Strengthening Supports for Family Caregivers*. Washington, DC: AARP Public Policy Institute. March 8, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.26419/ppi.00082.006>

³ Harrington, Elizabeth, and Bill McInturff. *Working While Caring: A National Survey of Caregiver Stress in the U.S. Workforce*. Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers (Americus, GA: 2021).

This proposal, however, also supports Maine businesses. A Paid Family and Medical Leave Program in Maine will benefit workers, employers, and the economy by helping family caregivers remain at their jobs. According to AARP's *Valuing the Invaluable* report, "when caregivers are unable to continue balancing work and caregiving responsibilities, employers are faced with the loss of valuable, experienced workers and the cost of hiring new employees." A 2017 report from the Center for American Progress found that after California implemented its PFML program, there was an 8% short-term increase in labor force participation among caregivers and a 14% percent increase in the long run.⁴

Paid Family and Medical Leave proposals, as I have shared, support employees and their employers, and especially those receiving support from their loved one. Maine's working family caregivers need access to paid leave to better support their loved ones who wish to age in place. AARP surveys have shown that a majority of older adults wish to remain in the community for as long as possible.⁵ However, many of us will require some support in order to remain in our communities as we age. Paid leave enables workers to take time off to provide that critical support to their loved ones and to help keep their parents, spouses, and other loved ones out of costly, taxpayer-funded nursing homes, saving the state money.

Access to paid leave is also critical to ensuring women in the workforce are on equal ground. Reports show that in Maine there is a six percentage-point gap in labor force participation between women and men. Further, in Maine, a typical worker who takes four weeks of unpaid leave loses more than \$3,300 in income.⁶ Women are more likely than men to take time to care for loved ones, resulting in loss of wages and retirement security for them.

Paid Family and Medical Leave is right for Maine. LD 1964 will help working Mainers and their families, will support small businesses and will benefit workers, employers, and the economy by helping family caregivers remain at their jobs. This bill comes to you after years of hard work to build an effective program that will fit our state. We urge you to vote in favor of LD 1964 so that Maine can finally support our working family caregivers. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Bridget Quinn

AARP Maine

⁴ Saad-Lessler, Joelle. Bahn, Kate. *The Importance of Paid Leave for Caregivers*. Sep. 27, 2017. Center for American Progress.

⁵ Binette, Joanne. 2021 Home and Community Preference Survey: A National Survey of Adults Age 18-Plus. Washington, DC: AARP Research, November 2021. <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00479.001>

⁶ <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/paid-leave-means-a-stronger-maine.pdf>