

Brandy M Staples
Phippsburg
LD 1964

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing: My name is Brandy Staples and I live in Phippsburg. 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 own a small business called Marlaina's Confections. I have been making and creating artisan fudge since 2011. During the gardening season, I also work at my family's farmers market, The Farmers Cupboard.

I love being self-employed. I get to make my own hours, create fudge at the time that works with my schedule. I work hard at what I do. But being self-employed doesn't come without challenges. When I was 26, I was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer that I wasn't supposed to survive. I shouldn't be alive right now. I go to doctors appointments regularly to make sure that my cancer doesn't come back.

If I get sick again, what options do I have? My income is based on me working for myself and what I am able to sell at the farmers market or with my fudge company. Maine needs a public, statewide paid family and medical leave program. As this bill currently stands, the program would almost entirely be privatized. I strongly urge the committee to make the program a public insurance plan. Most of the states that have a paid family and medical leave program in place have created a public plan. These states have had better experiences than the one state that contracted with a third party. In the state with a privatized program, performance standards are not met, there were higher administrative costs, and more claim denials. That is not the program we want in the state of Maine. We want it to be easy for Mainers to get the time off they need in case of illness, family, or any other reason. The plan should be for the people of Maine.

I want access to a paid family and medical leave program. I need access to a paid family and medical leave program. We all hope to not need to use it, but we need to plan for it as a possibility. I didn't think I would have cancer at 26 - but I did. I live every day thinking that I or a loved one could get sick - and what would that mean for my income? I strongly urge this committee to pass a strong PFML program that benefits everyone in the state of Maine.

Thank you.
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