

Thank you for allowing me to address my concerns.

I have been a Human Resources professional for the past 15 years and I have some major concerns about LD1964, especially in the hospitality industry.

1. Lack of Clarity. There has been very little information distributed about how this program will work. What are the qualifications for eligibility? I understand there is a dollar amount that must be paid in, but how often can they take the leave? Are employees eligible to take consecutive leaves under this program? What if the leaves are consecutive but covered under two different calendar years. Do they need to pay in an additional amount before they can take a second leave? How is this handled for businesses that operate in other states as well? How would this effect someone who lives in New Hampshire, but works in Maine and vice versa? What exactly constitutes a close bond? If two co-workers are close friends and one is sick, could we potentially lose two employees for up to 12 months? Must that person actually be a caretaker or just someone they feel close to? Are we able to ask for proof of illness and being unable to work? How will the state get their information? We already submit multiple wage reports such as our UC1 reports, so what type of extra burden will this put on our already stretched HR teams across the state?
2. Labor shortage. Across the state, businesses are faced with labor shortages. Employers are faced with challenges to find employees who will keep the business running. H2B programs are becoming more prevalent as employers are finding it harder and harder to balance running a successful business with the lack of employees. In response, employers are shortening their hours, limiting their offerings, and finding other creative means to keep the doors open. Having employees leave for months at a time, simply because a person they have "a bond" with is sick is both ridiculous and damaging for businesses. This is a great way to exacerbate the labor shortage. Not to mention the extra burden this will put on already stretched HR and payroll departments across the state.
3. Cost. Inflation is extremely high right now. Families across Maine are struggling with basic necessities like groceries and heating oil. This program makes employers pay more money and, not only that, taxes employees resulting in a loss of net income for all Mainers. How is that a good thing? Employers will undoubtedly need to raise costs of their goods and services in order to meet this challenge coupled with Mainers overall making less net money. Clearly this is a problem.

I urge everyone to kill this program before it kills Maine businesses and kills the spending power of Maine families.

Thank you,

Rebecca Vigue

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