

**TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS COALITION (MIRC)
Supporting L.D. 1964: An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to
Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program**

Sponsor: Senator Mattie Daughtry
Public Hearing: Thursday, May 25, 2023 at 1:00pm

Dear Members of the Committee on Labor and Housing:

My name is Tobin Williamson and I am the Advocacy Manager with the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC), a statewide network of almost 100 member organizations working to enhance the lives of Maine's immigrant communities. MIRC works to advance systemic changes in Maine through collaborative advocacy to ensure that voices of the state's large, diverse, and growing immigrant communities are heard. I regret that my travels prohibit me from joining you in Augusta or on Zoom today, but I am confident there are dozens of supporters speaking out in loud and proud support of L.D. 1964 today without me.

This afternoon, one of my colleagues has been on and off the phone probably over a dozen times trying to coordinate a situation regarding a health emergency for their mother, who has just been diagnosed with dementia and is quickly declining. My colleague is frustrated with the lack of healthcare facilities available in the greater Portland area, and due to long wait lists for availability, has made the difficult decision to bring their mother into their home to care for her for the rest of her life, or at least for the time being. I cannot help but think about the impact a Paid Family Medical Leave policy in the future would have for my colleague and so many others in that challenging situation.

As I mentioned earlier, MIRC serves and advocates for Maine's immigrant communities. One of the common themes found in many of them are strong family ties; it is not uncommon to find several generations living in the same household. In addition to parents taking care of children, you also commonly see adults taking care of their parents, siblings taking care of siblings, and so on. The concepts of "family" and "care" are very powerful for many of our constituents. There is no doubt they would greatly benefit from the policies espoused in L.D. 1964.

Yet it is important to note paid family leave is not *just* an immigration issue. The colleague I mentioned earlier is not an immigrant, she is a multiple-generation Mainer born and raised here. The same is true for my partner's aunt, who was the caregiver of her husband in the final years of his life as he battled debilitating Alzheimer's disease. No matter one's background, odds are a person will have experiences like recovering from illness or injury, taking care of an ailing parent, or raising a child. It is no surprise, then, that an *overwhelming* majority of Maine residents support the idea of paid family and medical leave benefits.

Senator Daughtry, Representative Cloutier, the Maine Paid Leave Coalition (of which MIRC is a proud member), and the PFML Coalition have spent literal years finetuning this legislation. Most developed countries in the world have a paid leave program. It is good for Mainers, good for business, and good for our society. For these reasons, we cannot understate our support for L.D. 1964, and hope to see it passed without delay. Thank you very much for your consideration of this important issue.

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