



May 18, 2023

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services,

I join you today on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby. We are also the conveners of the Maine Paid Leave Coalition, with a membership of nearly 40 organizations and businesses representing over 200,000 Mainers. I am before you today **Neither For Nor Against LD 258, An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations.**

We can't consider the landscape of labor without acknowledging the disproportionate impact of our labor policies on women and caregivers.

- Women's jobs represent 75 percent of pandemic related job losses¹, and women's participation in the workforce is at its lowest point in over 30 years².
- Maine women are far more likely than men to work part-time cite unpaid caregiving as the reason for working part-time – in fact, too few men cited these concerns to show a statistical sample³.
- Women are the backbone of caregiving in Maine (over 60%⁴), which is the primary reason they are twice as likely to live in poverty as men during their retirement years.⁵

These facts are related and are driven by **a systemic lack of investment in care infrastructure in Maine and nationally. Right now, we have a once in a generation opportunity to change that.**

Paid Family and Medical Leave is the rare piece of state infrastructure that meets business, human, and political needs:

- It **significantly decreases turnover costs for small businesses**, because employees are more likely to return to their jobs after paid leave.⁶

¹ National Women's Law Center (2022). Women Gain 83% of Jobs While 170,000 Women Leave Labor Force in June. Retrieved from <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/June-Jobs-Day.pdf>

² National Women's Law center. (2023). Another 275,000 Women Left the Workforce in January. Retrieved from <https://nwlc.org/resource/january-jobs-day-2021/>

³ Cutler Institute (2022). Economic Security of Older Women in Maine. Available at MaineWomen.org/publications

⁴ Maine CDC. (2019). Maine Caregiving Infographic. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/data/infographic/2019/maine-caregiving.html>

⁵ Cutler Institute. (2022). The Economic Security of older Mainers: A Data Report. Retrieved from <https://www.mainewomen.org/s/EconomicSecurityOlderWomeninMaineReport-FINAL2.pdf>

⁶ Nadeau et al. (2017). Paid Sick Days and Paid Family and Medical Leave Are Not Job Killers. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/paid-sick-days-and-paid-family-and-medical-leave-are-not-job-killers/>

- It **stabilizes the workforce**, because it allows people to meet their family needs and then return – and especially keeps women attached to the work force.⁷
- It **improves family economic stability**, women’s retirement savings, and evens out the gender- and race-pay gap.⁸
- It **improves overall health of the population**, by increasing rates of breastfeeding, bonding, family care, aging in place, vaccinations, and more – which means that the state’s investment comes back.⁹
- It is **supported overwhelmingly by Mainers**, including over 80 percent of registered Republicans.¹⁰

We have a rare opportunity before us. The Maine Commission on Paid Family and Medical Leave has presented a unanimous report after 18 months of diligent bipartisan work. We have a bipartisan bill reflecting the findings. We have a coalition of nearly 40 member organizations, representing over 200,000 Mainers – you’ll meet many of them next Thursday! We have signatures from 80,000 of our neighbors demanding this change. We have the most promising revenue forecasts in a decade.

We simply need a one-time investment in the startup costs, to build a game-changing piece of infrastructure that will improve the health of our people and our economy.

Maine can’t wait. It is time to make this investment, and I hope you will pass a budget that recognizes that the time for Paid Family and Medical Leave has come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Destie Hohman Sprague, Executive Director

⁷ Institute for Women’s Policy Research. (2020). New Study Reveals Paid Family Leave Policies Lead to 20 Percent Fewer Women Leaving the Workforce. Retrieved from <https://iwpr.org/media/press-releases/new-study-reveals-paid-family-leave-policies-lead-to-20-fewer-women-leaving-the-workforce/>

⁸ Bipartisan Policy center. (2021). Paid Family Leave Can Help Close the Gender Pay Gap. Retrieved from <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/paid-family-leave-can-help-close-the-gender-pay-gap/>

⁹ CNN. (2016). The benefits of paid leave for children are real, majority of research says. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2015/10/29/health/paid-leave-benefits-to-children-research/index.html>

¹⁰ PanAtlantic Research. (2023). Memo: Paid Family and Medical Leave Poll Results. Retrieved from <https://mainefamilyleave.org/s/04072023-Maine-Polling-Memo-1.docx>