



Maine Grocers &  
Food Producers  
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Friday, April 19, 2019

**IN OPPOSITION: LD 1410 'An Act To Create Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits**

Dear Senator Bellows, Chair, Representative Sylvester, Chair, and Members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

My name is Christine Cummings and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association. Originally from Augusta, I now live in Sidney. The Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association is a business trade association representing more than 200 businesses within Maine's food community; main street businesses including independently owned and operated grocery stores and supermarkets, food and beverage producers and processors, manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, and supportive service companies.

We are opposed to a mandatory employee contribution to fund the 'Family and Medical Leave Insurance Fund'. Our two largest concerns are that this bill makes the contributions mandatory and that the payroll contribution is a variable determined by the Department of Labor.

If employees across the state are ordered to devote a portion of their paycheck to a statewide program, inevitably, they will seek out an opportunity to utilize the program that they have helped to fund. They lawfully are entitled to use the benefit. Employers are obligated to hold the employee's position for the duration of their leave. These holes in adequate staffing will be challenging especially with the possible increase in employees taking the leave they've rightfully paid for. This will affect businesses of all industries and sizes and could have a crippling effect on employee morale as the workload of their peers have shifted to their plates and possible implications on production and revenue if businesses become short staffed.

The proposed .55% contribution of wages (except that below \$12,000 a 12-month period) is subject to the department evaluating the program and determining on an annual basis the contribution needed to finance the program. We have no data to know whether or not this is an appropriate amount of capital nor if this is the correct figure to maintain 140% of the previous year's spend. By simply creating the fund with an arbitrary figure and without a real understanding of the program's funds and use, we cannot confidently say the program is sustainable or that as the department analyzes the program that employee contributions will not increase.

We believe there is much more to be done to fully understand the dollars needed to ensure the program is sustainable, to comprehend the number of employees who will utilize the program, and the big picture impact on employers. We support efforts to continue to review the feasibility of a program and are happy to help provide perspective from our industry as needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

*Christine Cummings*

Christine Cummings  
Executive Director