



February 25, 2019

Senator Bellows, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing: my name is Kate Knox and I'm here on behalf of EqualityMaine and GLAD. EqualityMaine is the statewide LGBT public education and advocacy organization, with more than 70,000 members across the state of Maine. GLAD works in New England and nationally to advance LGBT equality through strategic litigation, public policy advocacy, and education. Both organizations are in support of LD 369.

Passing this Earned Paid Sick Days proposal is the right thing to do because it's important that Maine attract and retain the best and brightest employees. Offering paid sick time would show that Maine understands the needs of all the people who choose to live and work here, and who in turn make this state so special.

There's no denying that just about every one of us-- LGBT or not -- will one day have to call their boss and tell them they can't come in due to illness. But LGBT people in the United States are uniquely impacted by not having paid sick leave laws, and new data from the Center for American Progress backs that up.

According to the research, 42 percent of LGBT people say they've needed to take time off work at some point to care for a sick family member. LGBT couples raising children are also twice as likely to have household incomes near the poverty line compared to their non-LGBT peers -- and single LGBT people are three times more likely to live near the poverty threshold than their non-LGBT peers. The reality is that these folks simply can't afford to take unpaid time off work, and this proposal would make a huge difference. Earned paid sick leave would also be significant to members of the transgender community, older Mainers, and folks living with HIV/AIDS.

Finally, it's important that our public policy acknowledges that families in Maine take diverse forms. To that end, we are especially supportive of this proposal's inclusive definition of family, which recognizes that many Mainers, especially LGBT people, have chosen or extended family whom they care for. We thank Senator Millett for her leadership on this issue, and we hope you all will support it.

Kate Knox, on behalf of
EqualityMaine and GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)