



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

MEDIA RELEASE

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Roll-Back Agenda Meets Resistance in Augusta

Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development Committee hears hours of testimony

Augusta – Members of the Maine Women's Lobby joined dozens of people from around the state to voice opposition to bills that would undermine basic workplace protections for Maine people.

L.D. 1207, "An Act to Amend the Labor Laws Relating to Certain Agricultural Employees," would repeal laws passed in 1975 and 1997 to provide protection for workers in the notorious egg processing facilities associated with Jack DeCoster. The bill would exempt those workers from qualifying for the Maine minimum wage, leaving them only the lower federal minimum wage standards to guarantee their income. Further, it would exempt those workers from overtime protections and rescind their right to form a union.

In her testimony against L.D. 1207, Laura Harper, Director of Public Policy for the Maine Women's Lobby stated, "Repealing the right to overtime pay and the right to unionize for this specific workforce would disproportionately harm the many low-income families already living on the fringes of our communities. These families desperately rely on the minimal wages they earn doing dirty, difficult, and at times downright dangerous jobs. We cannot deprive them of the right to overtime pay."

Another bill aimed at rolling back protections, L.D. 1346, "An Act to Enhance Access to the Workplace for Minors," would repeal minimum wage protections for high school students under the age of 20—limiting their income to just \$5.25 in the first six months of employment. L.D. 1346 also eliminates any cap on the number of hours a 16 or 17 year-old could work on a school day or during the school week.

At a press event earlier in the day, Maine Women's Lobby Executive Director, Sarah Standiford, said, "Far from helping kids support their families, this bill – yet another unprecedented roll-back of Maine's labor protections – will increase the hours teens can work, lower their wages, and decrease their chances of future success."

These two bills are part of the roll back agenda promoted by Governor LePage. Rather than creating jobs, these undermine the very workplace protections that allow workers and businesses to thrive. Said Standiford, “Maine teens need education. Maine adults need jobs. This bill is just backwards.”

The Maine Women’s Lobby urged the Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development Committee to vote *ought not to pass* on both of these bills.

Maine Women’s Lobby is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, membership organization working since 1978 to increase opportunities for women and girls through advocacy and legislative action.

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