

Leo Waltheri
Islesboro
LD 1964

Honored members of the committee,

My name is Leo Waltheri and I am the owner of a small business on the island of Islesboro; I own and operate the only year round sit down cafe and restaurant on our island.

I am in favor of the proposed legislation. My employees deserve protection. I understand that there is concern that this bill might put unnecessary burden on small businesses, but I'm here to say that this bill makes small businesses better competitors in the search for quality employees. All businesses on our island are small businesses, and the residents of this island, my friends and family and neighbors, deserve protections when unexpected or emergent needs arise. Rather than a burden, I understand that my best interests are best protected when my community is strong and supported.

The population of this ferry-accessible island is an aging one - any one of my employees might need to take time away to care for an aging relative at any time. Furthermore, my spouse and I are starting a family, and will ourselves be better supported with the passage of this legislation. Our business also employs a number of queer individuals, and this legislation will offer them flexibility to pursue gender-affirming surgeries without the risk of lost wages or the burden of finding new employment.

But more than any of these reasons, this legislation is the right thing to do. Period. And frankly, that reason alone would be enough to pass a bill in a society truly dedicated to taking care of its people.

Thank you for your time.