

**Testimony in Opposition to LD 618, “An Act to Allow Minors Under 16 Years of Age to Work Until 9 p.m. During the School Year and Until 10 p.m. During Summer Vacation,” and LD 644, “An Act to Expand Employment Opportunities for Minor Students by Eliminating Certain Work Limitations”**

March 18, 2025  
Arthur Phillips

Good afternoon, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor. My name is Arthur Phillips. I’m a Policy Analyst at the Maine Center for Economic Policy and I am here to testify in opposition to LD 618 and LD 644. MECEP opposes both bills because they expose children to unnecessarily long work hours which would have negative impacts on their physical and mental health and ability to learn in school.

Existing limits on student work hours are in place for a reason: to ensure that school remains their top priority and that they have adequate time for rest, study, and extracurricular activities. Removing these protections would place undue pressure on students to prioritize work over academics, a burden that would disproportionately fall on children from families with lower incomes.

Work experience is good for adolescents and sometimes an economic necessity. But research shows that adolescent students who work excessive hours have worse school performance than their peers: these students spend fewer hours on homework and extracurricular activities, more often miss school and do not complete assignments, graduate from high school at lower rates and are less likely to pursue or complete higher education.<sup>i</sup>

LD 618 would allow 14 and 15-year-old students to work until 9pm during the school year, which would negatively impact their ability to balance school and work and likely worsen their ability to get sufficient sleep. LD 644 would repeal most limits on work hours for students aged 16 and 17, who under current law can already work past 10pm on school nights and for 24 hours a week during school.

Younger workers are also more susceptible to injury. Research shows that younger workers are more than twice as likely to be injured on the job than workers over the age of 25.<sup>ii</sup> Reports from the Maine Department of Labor show an elevated number of injuries among minors in recent years, with more than 200 reports per year in each of the past eight years.<sup>iii</sup> Eliminating work-hours limits from state law could cause these numbers to rise further.

In addition to the immediate impacts on children in our state, these bills would undermine Maine’s long-term economic productivity. Under these proposals, we would expect worse academic outcomes and less pursuit of higher education, which are associated with lower lifetime earnings and economic productivity.

For these reasons, we urge you to reject any proposed changes to Maine’s laws regarding the employment of children.

Thank you and I welcome any questions you may have.

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<sup>i</sup> Staff J, Schulenberg JE, Bachman JG. Adolescent work intensity, school performance, and academic engagement. *Sociol educ.* 2010 Jul 1;83(3):183-200. doi: 10.1177/0038040710374585. PMID: 20802795; PMCID: PMC2926992.

<sup>ii</sup> Guerin RJ, Reichard AA, Derk S, Hendricks KJ, Menger-Ogle LM, Okun AH. Nonfatal Occupational Injuries to Younger Workers — United States, 2012–2018. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2020;69:1204–1209. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6935a3>

<sup>iii</sup> Report on Child Labor in Maine, Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Standards, Wage and Hour Division, February 2025, available at <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/11580>.