

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, Honorable Members of the Labor Committee:

My name is Gordon Street. I live and vote in Lincoln.

I offer the following testimony in favor of LD 599 for the following reasons:

Way back in 1979, when I graduated from college and started my first career, I was totally oblivious to what was happening in the U.S. economy, that while worker productivity continued growing and growing and growing, growth in hourly wages had a few years earlier pretty much ground to a halt once inflation was factored in.

In my first career, I was a news reporter and I loved my job, but a dozen years later, despite pay raises and often working overtime, sometimes working as much as 100 hours of overtime a month, it seemed like I was always struggling financially, never able to get ahead. Sometime along the way I discovered that when my last employer had hired me (and most of my colleagues) as a salaried employee instead of an hourly worker, the contract did allow us to earn overtime pay BUT on a variable rate. The more overtime I/we worked, the less I/we would earn per overtime hour.

I ended up deciding to change not just my employer but my career and I went back to school, pursuing a degree in clinical psychology. This time I went in eyes more fully open, after studying the financial expectations. My new career was predicted at the time to more than double my annual income with my projected starting salary.

I love my job, but those projections failed to come about. In fact, by the time I graduated, average starting salaries for clinical psychologists had actually declined to the point that I would be lucky to if my starting salary in my new career would provide a 50% increase over the ending salary of my previous career. It would take me more than twice as many years as I had anticipated to pay off my graduate school loans.

It didn't stop there. A 2022 article in Psychotherapy Notes showed that average salaries of psychologists (in 2021 dollars) had gone from an average of \$89,064 in 2007 to only \$89,907 ten years later. A 2022 CNBC article pointed out that while worker productivity had grown almost 62% since I graduated college in 1979, worker wages had grown by less than 18%, less than one-third as fast. It is not employers who need protection from employees but the other way around.

Let me be clear that LD 599 with its \$58,656 salary threshold will do nothing to help me personally. It won't even help enough Mainers overall, only 8% of our state's workforce. But we need laws like this to protect employees, to give them a fair wage that doesn't just plod along with inflation – one that also gives them a tiny share of the phenomenal productivity growth we have seen in the United States since 1979 and reduces our nation's

unprecedented disparity between its wealthiest 1% and the rest of us. So, I support it and urge its passage for what it will do to make employment fairer for at least 50,000 of my neighbors.

Thank you for taking time to read my testimony, and thank you in advance for your support of LD 599.