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**Testimony of Mike Roland, Bureau of Labor Standards  
Maine Department of Labor**

**Neither For Nor Against LD #116  
An Act to Establish a Minimum Wage for  
All Health Care Workers Including All Support Staff  
To the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing  
Public Hearing, February 14, 2023**

Good afternoon, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. I am Mike Roland, Director of the Bureau of Labor Standards at the Maine Department of Labor. I am here today to speak on behalf of the Department neither for nor against LD 116, An Act to Establish a Minimum Wage for All Health Care Workers Including All Support Staff.

This bill provides that, beginning January 1, 2024, the minimum wage for individuals employed by or who work in a health care facility is \$15.00 per hour. While we understand and perhaps even sympathize with the intent of this proposal, we have some concerns about its actual effect.

Maine's minimum wage is indexed annually to inflation and is currently \$13.80 per hour. The wage level and method of indexing was established by referendum in 2015. Adjusting the minimum wage in this way is intended to ensure that workers earning the minimum wage can retain their purchasing power as the cost of living increases. We believe that this system is working well and achieves its intended result.

Were the bill to pass as written, the \$15 minimum for workers in health care facilities would be overtaken in the future by the regular minimum wage, due to the annual cost-of-living adjustment in that rate required by 26 MRS §664, subsection 1. Because of language in the bill, health care workers would then effectively be subject to a *subminimum* wage. We do not support subminimum wages for any workers.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have now or at a future work session.

The Maine Department of Labor is committed to serving Maine workers and businesses by helping employers recruit and train a talented workforce, providing workers with skills needed to compete in our economy, assisting individuals when jobs are lost, aiding people with disabilities reach career goals, ensuring safe and fair workplaces for people on the job and providing research and analysis of employment data to support job growth.