



**Alison Sucy, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Government Affairs,
on Behalf of the Maine Tourism Association**

In Opposition to

LD 827, An Act to Allow Employees to Request Flexible Work Schedules

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing:

My name is Alison Sucy and I am the Chief Operating Officer and Director of Government Affairs for the Maine Tourism Association. The Maine Tourism Association is a non-profit association and the state's largest tourism organization. MTA has been promoting Maine and supporting members in every type of tourism business such as lodging, restaurants, camps, campgrounds, retail, guides, tour operators, amusements, and historical and cultural attractions for over 100 years. I am testifying in opposition to LD 827.

In the tourism industry, flexibility is critical to nearly every type of business. Hotel occupancy varies greatly depending on time of year, day of week, events in town, bus tour schedules, or conferences. Large parties may show up at restaurants with little notice. Weather or special events may cause a great increase or decrease in attendance at amusement parks, museums, or theaters. A busy Tuesday one week may be very slow the next. A weekend in July may be far busier than a weekend in January.

Workers value flexibility as an important factor when choosing the tourism industry, and this flexibility is a two-way street. Employees want to schedule their work time around children's school events, sports schedules, and other family activities as well as their own schooling, vacations, and personal time. Employers, who are facing great workforce challenges, want to do everything they can do accommodate their employees and keep those workers happy and employed with them for the long-term--both year-round employees and those seasonal workers who return year after year.

For younger workers, seasonal workers, students, and retirees working part-time, the availability of additional shifts and the ability to make last minute changes to accommodate other jobs, school, or family obligations are critically important to them. Employers balance that with ensuring their customers and guests receive the top-quality hospitality for which Maine is known.

The Maine Tourism Association is the state's largest advocate for all tourism-related businesses. Incorporated in 1922, MTA members include lodging, restaurants, camps, campgrounds, retail, outdoor recreation, guides, tour operators, transportation, amusements, and cultural and historical attractions. MTA also operates on behalf of the state seven State Visitor Information Centers from Kittery to Calais, and annually produces the state's official travel planner, Maine Invites You (since 1933).

In the context of this bill, however, the “flexibility” is defined as an employee having set hours (different from the regular hours) for up to a six-month period. This is impractical for reasons mentioned above. For many tourism jobs, particularly in the peak of that business’ busy season, “regular” hours, such as 8-5 for five days a week, don’t exist. This is true for jobs such as housekeeping, servers, maintenance, retail, tour operations, amusements and outdoor recreation staff, and many others.

For a great number of tourism jobs, a set schedule that once granted that is expected to stay in place for six months is impractical for both employer and employee. The tourism industry is well-known for its flexibility but in a very different way than anticipated by this bill. For the tourism industry, the bill is unnecessary and contemplates more rigid schedules than those already available in most tourism jobs.

I respectfully ask that you vote Ought Not To Pass. Thank you for your time and consideration of our testimony.