

827 – Flexible Schedule DRAFT

Senator Tipping
Representative Roeder
Members of the Labor and Housing Committee

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

My name is Debra Hart and I am a resident of Manchester, Maine. I am testifying in opposition to LD 827 on behalf of my clients, the Dirigo Electric Cooperative, which are Maine's consumer-owned electric utilities. They include Van Buren Light & Power, Houlton Water Company, Eastern Maine Electric Cooperative, Fox Island Electric Cooperative, Madison Electric Works, Isle Au Haut, Kennebunk Light & Power District and Brunswick Landing and the electric utility at Brunswick Landing.

We believe several of the Dirigo members would come under the definition of a private employer and some under a definition of a public employer, which would likely include municipal and township employees. Regardless, we believe they would all be impacted by this legislation were it to pass.

Utility employees, both those that work on infrastructure and lines, plus those that work in-house cannot accomplish their duties on a flexible work schedule or at a location other than the place of employment. During the recent pandemic, these utilities were deemed essential, and they worked throughout that time, as they always do, at times required to maintain or restore power. Most of these small utilities have limited staff to do bookkeeping and billing functions and customers of the consumer-owned utilities often have the option of paying their bills at the office. They may have questions about a bill that they want help with or need to set up a payment arrangement. These are not functions that can be accommodated remotely. Line workers and other utility personnel also cannot work remotely, and although they are often required to work hours outside of a normal work week, those are hours needed to restore power or respond to any number of emergencies or accidents.

For all these reasons, we respectfully request that you have an exemption for employees of public utilities.

Thank you. I'd be happy to answer any questions or provide you with additional information should you need that.