

131st Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 23

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Testimony of Senator Mattie Daughtry introducing
LD 1756, An Act to Protect Employee Freedom of Speech
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing
May 9, 2023

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Mattie Daughtry, and I proudly represent Senate District 23, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth. Today I am pleased to introduce my bill LD 1756, “An Act to Protect Employee Freedom of Speech.”

The First Amendment gives Americans, including American workers, the right to speak their minds without fear of being censored or persecuted. On April 7, 2022, the National Labor Relations Board General Counsel Jennifer Abruzzo announced that she would ask the NLRD to find such mandatory meetings unlawful. LD 1756 would apply this standard in the workplace by allowing workers to refuse to listen to employers’ coerced speech on political or religious matters and return to work without fear of being disciplined or terminated. This bill would protect employees from “captive audience” meetings that prevent workers from exercising their rights to form unions. So far, Connecticut and Oregon have passed laws prohibiting captive audience meetings.

To be specific, LD 1756 would prohibit employers from disciplining, terminating, or threatening an employee for refusing to attend employer sponsored captive audience meetings intended to convey the employer’s opinion about religious or political matters, including union organizing.

It would also prohibit employers from forcing employees to listen to the employer’s views on political matters including:

- (1) elections for political office,
- (2) political parties,
- (3) proposals to change legislation or regulations, and
- (4) decisions to join or support a political part or political, civic, community, fraternal, or labor organization.

To be clear, LD 1756 would not prevent employers from discussing work-related issues or engaging in casual conversations about religion or politics. But it would strengthen workers’

constitutional rights to free speech and freedom of association, especially during a time when Maine workers are organizing unions.

I thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mattie".

Mattie Daughtry

Senate Assistant Majority Leader, Senate District 23

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