

131st Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 8

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Testimony of Senator Mike Tipping introducing
**LD 2032, An Act to Improve Maine's Labor Laws by Changing the Laws Governing
Elections of Collective Bargaining Agents for Certain Public Employees**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing
January 16, 2024

Rep. Roeder and colleagues of the Labor and Housing Committee, as you know my name is Mike Tipping and I represent Senate District 8 in central and northern Penobscot County. Today I present **LD 2032, An Act to Improve Maine's Labor Laws by Changing the Laws Governing Elections of Collective Bargaining Agents for Certain Public Employees.**

This legislation builds on the previous work of this committee and the 129th Legislature by extending majority signup organizing protections, often known as "card check," to more Maine public workers.

Since 2019, municipal, county and school employees have been able to form a union when a majority of workers sign a petition or cards declaring their intent to be represented together and collectively bargain for wages and working conditions. LD 2032 would allow state, higher education, and judicial employees in Maine the same right and opportunity.

Currently, even if an outsized majority of workers declare their intent to form a union, a public employer not covered under Maine's existing majority signup laws can delay recognition, sometimes for years, and can force a long and expensive election through the Maine Labor Relations Board.

This bill would still require that the MLRB review the organizing petitions and determine that a legitimate majority of workers have signed and that it's their intent to form a union. If there's a question of whether there is majority support, an election would still be held.

In my district, graduate student workers recently successfully organized a new union. Far more than 50% of them signed cards and the University of Maine System chose to recognize their clear intent. But that was a choice. Under current law, even if every single grad worker in Maine had signed a union card, their employer could still have chosen not to recognize them.

For those workers, that would have meant months spent again tracking down colleagues spread across Maine and the world, many of whom are cycling in and out of academic employment, and would have created an adversarial relationship with their employer right off the bat. Instead they've been able to spend that time working with the universities to address concerns and improve conditions.

I've also spoken with town workers, municipal administrators and local elected officials who have praised Maine's existing law for cutting down on red tape, costly litigation and bad blood between workers and employers when a union is being formed.

I'd like to thank Neil Daly from the Maine Labor Relations Board for providing testimony explaining the effects of this legislation in practical terms and I'd like to thank you all for your attention to this matter.

I'm happy to answer any questions.