



Testimony of Garrett Mason
in Opposition to LD 372

An Act to Increase Enforcement and Accountability for Wage and Hour Violations

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Garrett Mason. I am a resident of Lisbon Falls and am a partner at Dirigo Public Affairs. I am here offering testimony on behalf of my client The Maine Farm Bureau.

The Maine Farm Bureau is proud to represent farmers and landowners from all over the state since 1951. Our organization advocates for agriculture, landowners and the rural way of life that Maine is so well known for.

The amendment that was handed out last week was passed along to our government affairs committee for review. The Maine Farm Bureau is opposed to LD 372 and would ask the committee to vote ought not to pass.

Maine's farming industry has been part of 26 MRSA, §53 since 1999. Our members are fully aware of the additional powers of DOL to assess penalties for those in violation of the law - specifically those laid out for our industry in 26 MRSA, Chapter 7, Subsection 2-A. The Maine Farm Bureau feels the current law is adequate and does not need to be addressed. We also believe the penalties laid out in 26 MRSA, §646 are more than sufficient and give the Bureau and the Attorney General appropriate authority to bring remedy under the law to those who have been aggrieved.

We are also concerned about sweeping all of Chapter 7 into 26 MRSA, §53. This title covers a wide variety of employment situations and could bring up a myriad of unintended consequences. For example, if a farmer signs a subcontractor agreement with an HVAC company to maintain their refrigeration and that subcontractor is found in violation of this law, who would be responsible? If a farmer hires a member of the legislature and their schedule is no longer compatible could they be pursued under this statute?

On behalf of our Members and all of us at the Maine Farm Bureau we ask that this committee vote ought not to pass on this bill.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to try to answer any of your questions and provide answers for the ones I don't have at work session.