

Testimony of the Maine Labor Climate Council in support of the sponsor's amendment to LD 372

Senator Tipping, Rep. Roeder, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Scott Cuddy and I'm the Director of Policy for the Maine Labor Climate Council (MLCC). I live in Winterport.

The MLCC is a coalition of 16 public and private sector unions comprised of thousands of members across the state. We are dedicated to fighting the twin crises of Climate Change and Income Inequality at the same time.

We are here today in support of the sponsor's amendment to LD 372. As we at the MLCC fight climate change, we do that while simultaneously creating high-quality, family sustaining jobs. One of the ways we do that is to get laws passed that should ensure employees are being properly taken care of. However, this entire strategy relies on an enforcement regime that can actually look after those same workers.

The changes envisioned in the sponsors amendment are an excellent adjustment to Title 26, and will doubtlessly help employees of this state who are unfortunate enough to work for an employer who isn't following the law.

To be completely honest, for the four years I sat on this committee I thought the Bureau of Labor Standards could get back pay for workers. I was shocked to find out that I was wrong, and that the only way to get those back wages was by getting the AG's office to pursue a civil suit! The investigators from BLS have already done the leg work. The facts are there, and the ability to make the employee whole should be there, too.

Any labor law that Maine's legislature passes must be enforceable. The enforcement of any labor law must, at the bare minimum, make whole the employee who suffered harm, to the greatest extent possible. Giving BLS the authority to order the payment of back wages is the least we can do to ensure Mainers are properly protected from bad actors.

Thank you for your time, and I ask you to vote Ought to Pass as Amended on LD 372.