

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, Members of the Legislative Committee on Labor, My name is Fr. Michael Seavey and I am a Roman Catholic priest, and I'm pleased to present the official testimony of The Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in opposition to LD 187.

LD 187 is yet another annual attempt to make Maine into a so called "Right to Work" state. That title and the official name of this legislation are distractions from the legislation's real purpose. This legislation does not guarantee anyone a job or assure someone currently working they can't be fired.

Rather, the proposed legislation prohibits labor and management from requiring non-union workers to pay a fair share portion of the collective bargaining process giving all workers adequate pay, benefits and working conditions.

This legislation is proposed as promoting workers' freedom. In reality, the only freedom is placed in the hands of those who weaken efforts for just and safe workplaces.

Federal law requires labor unions to represent all workers in a bargaining unit, whether or not they belong to the union. Because the union contract benefits all these workers, non-union workers can be required to pay a fair share only for only union activities regarding collective bargaining and not any non-related bargaining activities. Paying one's fair share for contract benefits received is a moral responsibility.

Allowing workers to escape this moral responsibility only creates dissension and resentment in the workplace. This is an immoral use of freedom and one that weakens the human community. Workplaces are meant to create spaces for human flourishing and the common good. This is anti-worker, anti-working-class family, and therefore immoral legislation.

We are concerned that national efforts to weaken labor unions are coming at a time when income disparities are at some of the highest levels of our nation's history, and more economic power is concentrated in fewer and fewer people.

Workers already face significant obstacles in their attempts to organize for collective bargaining. High priced law offices charging millions of dollars to harass and intimidate workers present a ongoing force undermining workers. This creates an overwhelming number of unfair labor practice complaints to an overworked and understaffed National Labor Relations Board. Long periods of time before complaints are heard and settled create discouragement among workers in the organizing process. Justice delayed is justice denied. That is morally unacceptable.

The Roman Catholic Church has been a strong supporter of labor unions across the globe since the height of the Industrial Revolution in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Catholic moral teaching sees the

right to organize and the right to collective bargaining as basic human rights coming from human dignity being made in the image and likeness of God.

Recent teachings and actions of Catholic popes have solidified The Catholic Church's support for unions in our own times.

Pope St. John Paul II is credited with assisting the demise of Communism in Eastern Europe. He did so with the courageous work of the Solidarity Labor Union in Poland.

Pope Benedict XVI offered several statements supporting labor unions and expressed concern that governments were placing too many obstacles in the way of workers exercising their rights to organize for collective bargaining. He followed up saying, "The promotion of workers' associations that can defend their rights must therefore be honoured today even more than in the past, as a prompt and far-sighted response to the urgent need for new forms of cooperation at the international level, as well as the local level."

Pope Francis, "There is no good society without a good union, and there is no good union that is not reborn every day in the peripheries, that does not transform discarded stones of the economy into its cornerstones."

Across our nation, more and more people are beginning to realize the great value of labor unions and support for labor unions has grown in several recent opinion polls. In some polls, labor unions are one of the very few institutions growing in respect and trust among Americans.

Labor unions build community at the local level, provide proper training especially among the construction trades, and advocate for all workers. This helps stabilize family life and assures good communities for our children to grow and be educated in.

The Roman Catholic Diocese urges the Maine Legislature to again defeat this legislation and once again be on the side of workers and workers' families. I thank the Labor Committee for allowing this testimony today.