



## Maine Education Association

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March 18, 2025

### **MEA OPPOSITION TO LD 112, 618, and 644**

Dear Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Committee:

My name is Ben Grant and I am the General Counsel of the Maine Education Association. The MEA is a labor union representing about 24,000 educators and support staff in nearly every public school in the state, in both the University of Maine and Community College systems, and in several Academy schools. In addition, thousands of retired educators continue their advocacy work through the MEA-Retired program. The MEA, and the labor movement as a whole, has a long history of advocating for sensible labor laws in Maine, and personally I have represented hundreds of working people in Maine in various kinds of legal actions. In addition, the MEA has long advocated for reasonable laws regarding children and minors, given our members' first-hand experience in the classroom.

For that reason, the MEA opposes LD 112, 618, and 644, and urges the Committee to vote ought not to pass.

**LD 112:** While there may not be a direct correlation to wage rates and success in the classroom, it must be noted that sub-minimum wages for minors has a long and scandalous history in this country. The simple fact is that making this change invites abuse and exploitation of children. It may be that there is a benevolent intent in this proposal, but the history of industrial relations virtually guarantees that some employers will not be able to resist the lure of low wages to both undercut the adult workforce and to overwork youth who need to be focused on other things.

**LD 618 & 644:** These proposals should be defeated because they erode the proper balance between work, education, and "being a kid." There can be no serious argument that students can best engage in their education when they are rested and ready. These bills peel away several protections in Maine law designed to ensure that is happening on a daily basis. Simply put: more than 6 hours of work on a school day is too much. For students who are still minors, our policy needs to be directed at the fulfillment and betterment of their education. We still allow ample time for employment, but at that age time spent in and on education is more important – and our policy should reflect that value.

Thank you, and the MEA urges a No vote on all of these bills.

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