



MAINE AFL-CIO

A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers
21 Gabriel Drive, Augusta, Maine 04330



(207) 622-9675

Visit our website: www.maineaflcio.org

President
Cynthia Phinney

Vice President
Grant Provost

Secretary Treasurer
Doug Born

Testimony of Adam Goode, Maine AFL-CIO Legislative & Political Director, In Opposition to LD 618, "An Act to Allow Minors Under 16 Years of Age to Work Until 9 p.m. During the School Year and Until 10 p.m. During Summer Vacation" and LD 644, "An Act to Expand Employment Opportunities for Minor Students by Eliminating Certain Work Limitations"

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, my name is Adam Goode. I'm the Legislative and Political Director of the Maine AFL-CIO. We represent 40,000 working people in the state of Maine. We work to improve the lives and working conditions of our members and all working people. We testify in opposition to LD 618 and LD 644.

Current law states that young people who are 14 and 15 years old can work until 7 PM during the school year and until 9 PM during summer vacation. LD 618 would allow 14 and 15 year olds to work until 9 PM during the school year and until 10 PM during summer vacation.

LD 644 repeals the child labor laws for young people who are 16 and 17 years old. These include a repeal of the laws that say a 16 or 17 year old cannot work more than 24 hours a week when school is in session, more than 6 hours a day when school is in session and more than 50 hours a week and 10 hours a day when school is not in session. It repeals the law that says children cannot work more than 6 consecutive days. It also repeals the law saying children cannot work after 10:15 PM or before 7 AM on school days and after midnight and before 5 AM on non school days. It repeals the law that says children under 17 cannot work when school is in session and eliminates all record keeping rules for child labor.

Most importantly, it does not replace these guardrails with any law to govern hours that 16 and 17 year olds work, which would be a serious departure from Maine's history of recognizing the importance of young people focusing on educational achievement and the unique workplace safety issues that arise from young people performing work tasks that are often designed for adults.

These bills are a departure from our child labor laws that were enacted back in 1991. The Maine AFL-CIO, the Girl Scouts and others were leading advocates for those positive changes.

Maine legislators began drafting labor law in the middle of the 19th century. Child labor was one of their first areas of concern. From the outset, our labor law prioritized educational achievement over work for children and teens. Our first child labor law passed in 1847 and it made educational requirements in order to work. This bill runs afoul of Maine's tradition of passing laws that emphasize the importance of education over work.

The 1991 laws were spurred on by a number of events happening in Maine at the time. One was the death of a 15 year old who was working illegally on a trash truck. Another was a stream of complaints from the educational community regarding students falling asleep in class due to late hours of work. At that time Maine had one of the highest truancy and dropout rates in the nation. Addressing truancy and workplace safety are major motivations for having strong child workplace laws.

Attempts to weaken Maine's child labor laws by allowing students to work more hours even when school is in session will take us backwards on workplace safety. Young people are injured on the job more than others, partially due to inexperience, partially due to improper training and partially due to being expected to use equipment designed for adults. Longer hours in the workplace for children will lead to more injuries.

Our current statute allows young people to work while encouraging young people to gain the strongest education possible. The current law says those aged 16 and 17 can work up to 24 hours a week when school is in session, including until 10:15 pm on school nights. This allows for instilling a work ethic in young people while building a strong educational foundation.

Finally, we would remind the committee that education and schooling instills work ethic in children. A 16 year old has their entire life ahead of them to work more than 24 hours a week or after 10:15 pm. The window of life when a child can take full advantage of the skills related to work ethic learned in schools is limited and should be taken full advantage of.