

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
CHRISTINE M. LANDES, TOWN MANAGER FOR THE TOWN OF CHELSEA, MAINE

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor

Hearing Date: *March 18, 2025*

Testimony in Support of:

LD 55 ‘An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Accrual of Earned Paid Leave’

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

Good afternoon, I am Christine Landes, the town manager for the Town of Chelsea Maine. I am here today to testify in favor of amending Title 26 MRSA §637, sub-§3 regarding an amendment to the law governing the accrual of Earned Paid Leave.

On May 28, 2019, with an effective date of January 1, 2021, An Act Authorizing Earned Paid Leave was approved by the Governor to require employers, with more than ten employees in the usual and regular course of business for more than 120 days in any calendar year, to permit each employee to earn paid leave based on the employee’s base pay as provided. This law entitles an employee to earn one hour of paid leave for every forty hours worked, up to forty hours in one year of employment.

The caveat of that law required employers to limit the accumulation of additional paid leave if the employee carried any over into the next year. As an example, if an employee rolls over ten hours from year to year, then in the present year, they will only be entitled to accrue up to thirty additional hours of earned paid leave regardless of how much leave the employee would use in the current year. I ask each of you how this is fair to employees?

As a state with employers that consistently have open positions or limited applicants, we need to encourage people (especially the state’s aging workforce) to take jobs that will have benefits that don’t ‘expire’. Why should they be penalized for not using the time they earned by limiting the next years’ earnings?

As a current municipal manager, I find myself encouraging the town part-time office employees to either take their time at the end of the year (which hinders production in the town office) or for our paid volunteer fire fighters and/or part-time office staff to be paid out for their time at the end of the year so they can start over at zero on January 1. How is that fair? In essence we are hindering good people by taking away paid time off if they can’t use it or want to ‘save it’.

In summary, I am asking this committee to consider a change to the law governing the accrual of earned paid leave by allowing the employee to accumulate hours up to the accrual limit specified in the employer's policy governing paid leave. It will also allow those hours accrued, that are unused from the previous year of employment, be available for use by the employee in the next year without reducing the total amount of hours of paid leave that they can earn.

Thank you for listening to me today and I am available to answer any questions.