



**TESTIMONY OF MAINE EMPLOYMENT LAWYERS ASSOCIATION  
IN SUPPORT OF LD 616  
AN ACT TO INCREASE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR WAGE VIOLATIONS**

My name is Jeffrey Neil Young. I am an attorney with Solidarity Law and practice in Cumberland. I serve as an Executive Board member of the National Employment Lawyers Association (NELA), and vice-president of the Maine Employment Lawyers Association (MELA). NELA is the largest organization of civil rights lawyers in the country with about 4,000 national and affiliate attorney members. MELA is the largest organization of civil rights lawyers in Maine with about 75 member attorneys who represent employees in labor and employment matters across the state as at least 66.66% of their practice.

MELA supports the enactment of LD 616, An Act To Increase Accountability For Wage Violations. MELA is particularly interested in the provision in Section 3 of the bill, which would provide ongoing funding for 4 Labor and Safety Inspector provision within the Bureau of Labor Standards. Funding these provisions is critical to enforcement of the wage and hour provisions contained in Maine's Employment Practices statute. Absent funding these positions, enforcement would be left to the private bar, which cannot possibly handle the volume of complaints for wage theft. A public/private partnership best ensures that Maine workers have recourse for unpaid wages.

MELA further supports increasing the penalties for violation of Maine's wage statute from \$100 to \$500 and making the fine definite rather than leaving the amount subject to discretion. MELA also supports the addition of language subjecting repeat violators to fines of \$500 to \$1000 for each subsequent violation; serial violators should be punished more harshly.

Finally, MELA supports increasing the liquidated damages for violation of the wage statute from single to double damages. This mirrors the amount of liquidated damages due for violation of Section 626, unpaid wages upon cessation of employment. In both instances, payment has been delayed.

Thank you for your consideration.