



Testimony of Executive Director, Ben Lucas

Testimony in OPPOSITION to LD 607, “An Act To Restore Overtime Protections for Maine Workers”

March 22nd, 2021

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Ben Lucas and I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Jobs Council. The Maine Jobs Council is a new, statewide, nonpartisan, member-driven advocacy organization that advances public policies to support the creation and preservation of foundational jobs in Maine. I am here today to testify in opposition of LD 607.

LD 607 would increase the cost and burdens on employers at a time when they are already struggling to survive. Maine’s regulatory and business environment already rank among the highest in the nation. Our overall business environment is #46, we have the 6th highest energy cost, the 4th highest healthcare cost, the 4th highest tax burden, and our weekly wage is \$955, tied with Wyoming for 11th lowest. Our overall economic ranking is last in New England and if LD 607 passes, it will continue to put us at a disadvantage with the rest of the region.

A recent report from Oxford Economics ranked Maine #1 in the nation for economic vulnerability from the pandemic. The reasons for this are due to our percentage of small businesses and their limited ability to cope, our aging workforce, and our dependence on tourism and retail. This legislation would make things harder for all those struggling. What appears to be well-intentioned may actually do considerable harm to the people it aims to help.

The MJC supports making workers a top priority. The best way to do that is with a robust economy full of quality jobs that provide choices, career growth, and increasing wages. This law would lead to just the reverse. Supporting working people is critical, but the important word is

working. If our companies cannot compete, if money isn't invested here, if jobs stagnate or leave, then we'll have more and more people who are no longer working people.

There is no substitute for good jobs and those jobs result from companies that compete successfully to provide goods and services. Maine can't afford to be even more of an outlier than it already is. In fact, if we are going to truly improve the lives of Maine's working men and women, we need to help our employers be more competitive not less.

Thank you.

Ben Lucas
Executive Director
Maine Jobs Council