

Jeff McCabe
MSEA-SEIU Local 1989

TESTIMONY OF JEFF MCCABE, DIRECTOR OF POLITICS & LEGISLATION,
MSEA-SEIU LOCAL 1989, BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
LABOR AND HOUSING

Neither for nor against LD 182, An Act To Expand the Definition of "Essential Worker" To Include Retail and Food Service Workers, Sponsored by Representative Sean Paulhus

10 AM March 29, 2021, Cross Office Building Room 202

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, members of the Committee on Labor and Housing, I'm Jeff McCabe, Director of Politics & Legislation for the Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the Service Employees International Union (MSEA-SEIU Local 1989). Maine Service Employees Association is a labor union representing over 13,000 workers and retirees, mainly in the public sector, statewide, including workers throughout Maine State Government.

A recent amendment to LD 182 replaces the bill, which is a concept draft. The amendment defines essential businesses and operations and essential worker to mean any employee employed in an essential business and operation at the time the governor declares a state of emergency.

While we support the concept of this legislation and the goal of protecting and compensating essential workers, we have concerns about the ways in which the designation of "essential workers" may cut both ways. That is why we are neither for nor against LD 182.

To be sure, we recognize and appreciate all essential workers who have carried all of us through, and continue to carry us through, the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, workers in Maine State Government are considered as essential workers by this administration, and the administration has taken the position that all government services are essential services. However, while state workers in a handful classifications received hazard pay in recognition of their service and sacrifice during the pandemic, the administration ended that hazard pay on Dec. 31, 2020 even as the state emergency has continued.

We strongly believe all of Maine's essential workers need to be respected, protected and paid for their service and sacrifice. Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.