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TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 775

AN ACT TO INCLUDE WITHIN THE DEFINITIONS OF “PUBLIC EMPLOYEE” AND “JUDICIAL EMPLOYEE” THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN EMPLOYED FOR LESS THAN 6 MONTHS

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Labor and Housing Committee. I am Victoria Wallack, communications and government relations director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 775.

We testified in opposition to this bill last session, and that opposition remains.

This bill takes away a long-standing provision that gives public employees and their employers a six-month period to determine if a position in our schools is a good fit. That transition period allows the employee to get to know us and we to know them. It also gets them through the training aspects associated with the job.

We understand their union would like to have them as dues-paying members from day one. That should not be a reason to vote for this bill. The reason to vote against the bill is to help assure public school employees are the best possible fit for the job and the district is a good fit for the new hire – a goal we believe both employer and employee share.

And while this updated version of the bill portends to not allow grievances to be filed in the first six months, we would like stronger assurances.

The waiting period is designed to mitigate any issues that arise because of the newness of a job. It is truly on-the-job training and a grace period. It is a win-win and we are opposed to tipping the scale in favor of the union as an organization when doing so could be bad for the public employer and employee.