

Jeff McCabe
MSEA-SEIU Local 1989

Testimony of Jeff McCabe

Maine Service Employees Association, SEIU Local 1989

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

9 a.m. April 12, 2021, Cross Office Building 202

In Opposition to LD 455, An Act To Give the State the Sole Authority To Establish a Minimum Wage and Hazard Pay with Certain Exceptions, sponsored by Representative Daniel Newman

In Opposition to LD 543, An Act To Provide That the Minimum Wage Increases by the Cost of Living Every 3 Years, sponsored by Representative Dick Bradstreet

In Support of LD 734, An Act To Set a Minimum Wage for School Support Staff, sponsored by Representative Benjamin Collings

In Opposition to LD 774, An Act To Promote Minimum Wage Consistency, sponsored by Representative Joshua Morris

In Opposition to LD 1047, An Act To Create an Alternate Minimum Wage Applicable to Student Employees Who Are under 20 Years of Age and to Employees Who Are under 18 Years of Age, sponsored by Representative Shelley Rudnicki

In Support of LD 1279, An Act To Increase the Minimum Wage sponsored by Representative Benjamin Collings

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, members of the Labor and Housing Committee, I'm Jeff McCabe, Director of Politics and Legislation for the Maine Service Employees Association, Service Employees International Union Local 1989. We are a labor union representing over 13,000 public sector and publicly funded workers and retired workers statewide, including workers in all three branches of Maine State Government.

We urge you to support both LD 734, An Act To Set a Minimum Wage for School Support Staff, and LD 1279, An Act To Increase the Minimum Wage:

- Please support LD 734: This bill establishes a minimum hourly wage of \$16 per hour for school support staff for school years beginning after June 30, 2022. The bill requires the State on a one-time basis, for the school year beginning after June 30, 2022, to provide funds to school administrative units to make up the difference between what a school administrative unit currently pays school support staff and what the unit is required to pay under the minimum wage requirement. This legislation is responsible; it's the right thing to do to ensure all Maine school support staff earn at least \$16 an hour.

- Please support LD 1279: This bill increases the minimum hourly wage, starting January 1, 2022, from its present \$12.15 per hour to \$13 per hour and by an additional \$1 per hour each year until the minimum wage on January 1, 2025, is \$16 per hour. Beginning January 1, 2026, and every year after, the minimum wage increases by the cost-of-living increase, if there is any. As you consider LD 1279, it's important to note it would have a direct financial impact on hundreds of workers for Maine State Government. Currently nearly 400 state workers are making less than \$15 an hour. You may be aware that across the board, the State of Maine has been underpaying state workers for decades. It's documented most recently in the State of Maine Market Study Report <https://www.mseaseiu.org/2021/02/11/new-market-pay-study-state-workers-underpaid-compared-to-new-england/>. Dated Nov. 20, 2020, this report confirms what a similar study found back in January of 2009: State workers earn about 85% of what their counterparts are paid for comparable work. We all know there's only one way to address this inequity: Pay state workers what their counterparts earn. In the meantime, supporting 1279 would be an important step in that direction for hundreds of state workers who are doing their jobs every day, including during this ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, in service to the people of Maine. We urge you to oppose the other four bills included in this hearing: LD 455, An Act To Give the State the Sole Authority To Establish a Minimum Wage and Hazard Pay with Certain Exceptions; LD 543, An Act To Provide That the Minimum Wage Increases by the Cost of Living Every 3 Years; LD 774, An Act To Promote Minimum Wage Consistency; LD 1047, An Act To Create an Alternate Minimum Wage Applicable to Student Employees Who Are under 20 Years of Age and to Employees Who Are under 18 Years of Age. All of these ill-conceived bills would make it more difficult for workers to make ends meet and catch up with the cost of

living:

- Please oppose LDs 455 and 774 because they would prohibit Maine municipalities from enacting minimum wage laws; we think taking away rights from municipalities, especially their right to set a minimum wage higher than the state's, absolutely is the wrong way for Maine to go both in terms of keeping workers in Maine and treating them with the respect they've earned.

- Please oppose LD 543 because it would guarantee Maine workers earning the minimum wage won't be able to keep up with the cost of living. Any legislation putting Maine workers behind the cost of living should be rejected outright.

- Finally, please oppose LD 1047 because it would impose a massive pay cut of \$2.40 an hour, or \$96 a week, or \$4,992 a year, all based on a 40-hour week, to scores of Mainers under age 20 earning the minimum wage, and to all workers under age 18. Currently these workers earn Maine's minimum wage of \$12.15, yet the pay cut proposed in LD 1047 would reduce their hourly wages by 19.75 percent. The last thing Maine's minimum wage workers need is a pay cut!

As you consider all of these bills before you today, please recognize your responsibility as an elected leader to ensure every worker in our great state earns a living wage. That's why we encourage you to support LDs 734 and 1279, and oppose LDs 455, 543, 774 and 1047.

Thank you and I'd be glad to answer any questions.