



Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
54 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0054

Laura A. Fortman
COMMISSIONER

**Testimony of Michael Roland, Bureau of Labor Standards,
Maine Department of Labor
In Opposition of LDs 553 An Act To Provide That the Minimum Wage Increases by the
Cost of Living Every 3 Years, 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, 1279 An Act To Increase the Minimum Wage**
To the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing
Public Hearing, Monday, April 12, 2021

Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. I am Mike Roland, Director of the Bureau of Labor Standards at the Maine Department of Labor (Department) and I am here to provide testimony in opposition of LDs 553 An Act To Provide That the Minimum Wage Increases by the Cost of Living Every 3 Years, 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, 1279 An Act To Increase the Minimum Wage.

In 1938, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the *Fair Labor Standards Act* into law signaling a revolutionary assertion of workers' rights. A key standard established in this measure was the minimum wage: employers must not pay their workers less than this amount. Upon sending the original Labor Standards Act to Congress in 1937, FDR said that America should be able to offer all our working men and women "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work." The Department agrees— all workers should receive a fair wage. We believe that the minimum wage is intended to be just that: a minimum, a floor, a level below which none should go.

In 2009, the federal minimum wage was set to \$7.25 an hour, far below the equivalent in 1938. In 2016, Maine voters clearly supported raising the State's minimum wage to \$12.00 an hour by 2020 and at regular intervals thereafter. Before considering any significant changes such as those proposed today, we would rather determine the effectiveness of the new voter-approved standard, and especially the indexing component. We prefer to abide by the expressed will of the voters and continue the current process.

When we consider the impact on enforcement accompanying any change in statute, consistency is important to the Department. Consistency in statute reduces confusion and so benefits workers, businesses and the economy of the State. The Department would be concerned by any significant changes to the current law and would suggest we maintain the current law in order to maintain consistency in state law.

The Department will also be watching if Congress takes any action on the minimum wage since there has not been a change to the federal minimum wage in 12 years.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have now or at a future work session.

The Maine Department of Labor is committed to serving Maine workers and businesses by helping employers recruit and train a talented workforce, providing workers with skills needed to compete in our economy, assisting individuals when jobs are lost, aiding people with disabilities reach career goals, ensuring safe and fair workplaces for people on the job and providing research and analysis of employment data to support job growth.