



**Testimony of Executive Director, Ben Lucas**

Testimony in OPPOSITION to LD 938, “An Act To Ensure Maine Workers' Right To Request a Schedule Change at Their Places of Employment”

April 21st, 2021

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Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Ben Lucas, I live in Portland, 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 938.

We oppose LD 938 because it could have a negative impact on attracting and retaining foundational jobs. Right now, Maine has a serious workforce shortage, we have an aging workforce and not enough young people moving or staying in Maine. Over the next 5 years, Maine’s retiring workforce will leave 158,000 open jobs. Employers and managers need reliability from employees to work the schedule agreed to when hired. We encourage this committee to address legislation that helps address the pending workforce crisis.

We are also concerned that this would create more burdens on employers at a time when most are already struggling. Employees can already request schedule changes and employers can either grant them or not. The pandemic has made it incredibly difficult for employers to have reliable attendance at work and creating a potential \$5,000 fine for employers could have a negative impact on employees.

Individual pieces of legislation like the ones that have been introduced to this committee today are not the solution to solving our states economic problems. 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 553 passes, it will be one more thing that makes it harder for our state's economy to succeed.

We encourage this committee to start taking a more comprehensive look at how taxes, regulations, infrastructure, workforce challenges, and other issues act as a barrier to job creation in our state. Maine needs to develop and follow a long term strategic plan to create a tax base that works for all Mainers.

Thank you.

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