



# **MAINE AFL-CIO**

**A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers**

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**Testimony of Maine AFL-CIO Legislative & Political Director, Adam Goode, in Support of L.D. 1430, "An Act Regarding the Waiting Period for Compensation for Incapacity To Work under the Maine Workers' Compensation Act of 1992"**

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor & Housing, my name is Adam Goode. I'm the Legislative and Political Director of the Maine AFL-CIO. We represent 40,000 working people in the state of Maine. We work to improve the lives and working conditions of our members and all working people. We testify in support of LD 1430.

Under current law, working people employed at correctional facilities, municipal detention facilities and state mental health institutes must wait 7 days to become eligible for workers' compensation when they suffer and injury on the job. This bill fixes that problem by amending Maine's workers' compensation law to allow corrections workers to receive compensation from the date of incapacity and to allow mental health workers who are incapacitated due to an infectious disease or an assault by a resident to receive compensation from the date of incapacity.

These are dangerous jobs. Current policy requiring a 7-day waiting period fundamentally makes life challenging for corrections and mental health workers. Being injured due to an assault or an infectious disease exposure is always serious. The fact that most of these workers are able to return to work before the 7-day waiting period ends makes a bad situation even worse.

Personal leave time is limited for workers in these jobs. Currently, a worker who suffers an injury due to an assault or an exposure to an infectious disease falls behind financially if they are out of work for 4, 5 or 6 days. Their only recourse is to use up personal leave time, which is clearly not intended as a way to fill the gap when a worker is harmed on the job.

We have made the right decision to provide workers' compensation from the date of incapacity for firefighters. That policy has not resulted in a slippery slope of more and more workers being removed from the waiting period. These assaults are a common occurrence, are particularly rampant in mental health and correctional facilities and can regularly result in the worker being back on the job before they have ended the 7-day waiting period. This effectively blocks a worker from any meaningful coverage.

We urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1430.