



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Rep. Kevin O'Connell introducing
**LD 1436, An Act To Protect Certain Essential Workers from
Infectious Disease**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Kevin O'Connell. I represent House District 128, which is most of the city of Brewer. Thank you for the opportunity to present **LD 1436, An Act To Protect Certain Essential Workers from Infectious Disease**.

I think many of us here today looked at how unprepared vast sectors across the U.S. and Maine were for this pandemic when it hit and thought about what could have been done to put us in a better position to tackle this head on. For me, I think about the videos and photos of our frontline workers having to make do with homemade or improvised PPE when they were coming into direct contact and caring for people infected with COVID-19. To see our nurses, doctors and other critical healthcare staff wearing trash bags over their scrubs or pleading with the public to donate any extra N95s they might have at home, it was just unacceptable. We need to put steps in place to prevent that from happening again, and this bill would do just that.

LD 1436 would require employers of front-line medical employees, firefighters and correctional staff to supply these workers with the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) to carry out their duties. It would also require these employers to maintain a stockpile of PPE equal to three months of normal use by those employees. The bill specifies the PPE stockpile to include:

- N95 filtering facepiece respirators
- Powered air-purifying respirators with high-efficiency particulate air filters
- Elastomeric air-purifying respirators and appropriate particulate filters or cartridges
- Surgical masks
- Isolation gowns
- Eye protection
- Shoe coverings

Lastly, this bill would require these same employers to report back to the Maine Department of Labor its highest seven day consecutive daily average consumption of PPE by January 15, 2022.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal and for your attention. I am happy to answer any questions you might have for me, but I know there are others here today to testify to the specifics of this bill.