

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO
LD 1453, An Act To Protect Small Employers by Prohibiting Municipalities from Adopting Ordinances
Regarding Employee Work Benefits Other Than Ordinances Regarding Minimum Wage Rates

Nate Williams, Director of Collective Bargaining & Research
Maine Education Association
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor & Housing

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Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and the other esteemed members of the Committee on Labor and Housing:

My name is Nate Williams, and I am the Director of Collective Bargaining and Research for the Maine Education Association (MEA) which represents 24,000 teachers, education support professionals, and retired educators across Maine.

I am here to testify in opposition to LD 1453, An Act To Protect Small Employers by Prohibiting Municipalities from Adopting Ordinances Regarding Employee Work Benefits Other Than Ordinances Regarding Minimum Wage Rates.

The doctrine of local control is something that Mainers cherish. The idea that those closest to the people in a community are the best judges of standards for that community is embedded in the state constitution's local control provision in Article 8.

This bill would overrule those communities who have decided that to maintain their local standard of living employers need to provide a certain minimum level of benefits to all employees.

The global pandemic has made it clear that conditions can vary widely from one community to another within a state. If one Maine community wants to require more health and safety standards beyond the state and federal guidelines, they have the right (and some would say obligation) to do so to provide for the health and safety of their residents. Likewise, if a community decides that they want a minimal standard of benefits above the state minimum for all working residents, they should be allowed to do so.

For example, this statute could prevent the hazard pay ordinance passed in the City of Portland that would pay time-and-a-half to essential workers during a declared emergency. The community decided that it wanted to raise standards for those forced to work during difficult circumstances. As this is not strictly a minimum wage ordinance, this bill would pre-empt the will of the voters who passed this in a referendum and goes against the doctrine of local control.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 1453."