



**american  
ROOTS**

**Testimony of Ben Waxman, Owner of American Roots, in Support of LD 1756, "An Act to Protect Employee Freedom of Speech"**

Good afternoon, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Labor & Housing Committee, my name is Ben Waxman. I'm the co-owner of American Roots, a manufacturing company based in Westbrook that makes quality clothing and apparel with every component part being American made. We employ sixty-five people at our factory in Westbrook. I testify today in support of LD 1756.

American Roots started with a dream that we could start a factory, employ Maine people, and make quality products right here in the United States, right here in Maine. We believed we could do this and treat people well at every step of the way. We are doing just that. We manufacture our clothing and apparel with 100% American made products. Our employees are unionized. Our employees are family, and we have a great relationship with the union.

We are a value driven business, and we want other businesses to follow that model. My wife and I started this business because we believed we could bring American manufacturing back, put Maine people to work and make a high-quality product that people felt proud of. We've done that.

Our workers took jobs at American Roots because they wanted to make a decent living, provide for their families, and make a product they felt good about. Every employee should have that right. As a business owner, I'm supportive of LD 1756 because I don't think it is an employer's place to force their politics or their religion on their employees. That's a matter of personal conscience.

The bill before you grants some very modest protections to workers. It allows employees to refuse to attend mandatory meetings about topics of politics or religion and simply do their job without fear of termination or discipline. As I understand it, if an employer wanted to hold a meeting telling their employees to vote for Rep. Drinkwater or vote for Rep. Roeder, they can still do that. An employee just has a right to not attend that meeting and instead to just do their job.

I also believe that workers should have the freedom to join a union if they want to. That's an American right. And, again, all this bill does is give workers the right to not attend an anti-union meeting and simply do their job.

Maybe I'm old fashioned, but that seems very reasonable and fair to me. For all of these reasons I encourage you to support LD 1756.

Sincerely, Ben Waxman, CEO / Co-Founder American Root