

Testimony of Beth White
Maine Service Employees Association, SEIU Local 1989

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

In Support of LD 2032, An Act to Improve Maine's Labor Laws by Changing the Laws Governing Elections of Collective Bargaining Agents for Certain Public Employees

Sponsored by Senator Mike Tipping

January 16, 2024, 1pm, Cross Building Room 202 and Electronically

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, members of the Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Beth White, director of politics and legislation for the Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the Service Employees International Union. The Maine Service Employees Association represents over 13,000 workers across the state.

We're here in support of LD 2032. This legislation would provide consistency in Maine statutes for all of Maine's public sector employees with respect to public workers who file requests with their employers to be represented by certain organizations as their collective bargaining agent.

LD 2032 would amend the labor relations laws governing state employees, judicial employees and university, academy and community college employees. Currently, the Maine Labor Relations Board (MLRB) follows a lengthy process when workers in the state, judicial, or higher education workforce wish to form a union. This process typically begins with each worker who desires a union signing a card authorizing a collective bargaining agent to represent them. These cards are then filed with the MLRB. Even if the Maine Labor Relations Board finds that a majority of workers legally signed union cards, the public employer is authorized to request an election from the Maine Labor Relations Board.

In 2019, the law was changed to allow municipal employees to have a majority of workers submit union cards for verification to the MLRB, and if the MLRB determines that a majority of employees have legally signed cards with the intent of organizing a union, their union is formed. As in the laws governing municipal employees, LD 2032 would require an election in such cases only if, after examining the demonstration of majority support, the Maine Labor Relations Board finds majority support for the organization to be in question.

We think it's reasonable, appropriate and necessary to have consistency in Maine statute for Maine's public workers regardless of whether they work for a municipality, state government, public university, academy or community college. As such, we respectfully ask you to support LD 2032.

Thank you and I would be glad to answer any questions.