

Testimony in Support of LD 372
“An Act to Increase Enforcement and Accountability for Wage and Hour Violations”

Good afternoon Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Scott Harriman and I am testifying in support of LD 372, “An Act to Increase Enforcement and Accountability for Wage and Hour Violations.”

I happen to have a personal connection to this issue, having been a victim of wage theft by a Maine employer who abused their ability to classify certain employees as exempt from the FLSA.

About a decade and a half ago, in my first job out of college, I worked for a publicly-traded software company located in a suburb of Portland. Most of my coworkers were also recent college graduates who were young, naïve and eager to please. We were often asked to come in early or to stay late, working many extra hours for which we were not compensated, due to us receiving a salary and being classified as exempt.

I eventually moved on from that company, but shortly afterward I received notice of a class-action lawsuit against them. I had not been aware that, due to the nature of the duties that I and my coworkers had performed, we could not legally be classified as exempt. That case ended up being settled confidentially out of court.

The most frustrating part of this story is that this company continues the same behavior. Looking online, I can see that they have settled at least four more similar lawsuits since that time, with some as recent as about a year ago. It is apparently less expensive for them to pay lawyers to settle these cases than it is to simply pay their employees the wages they have rightfully earned.

We need to take meaningful action – strengthening enforcement, raising penalties, etc. – to help prevent this type of wage theft by limiting a company’s ability to treat the minimal oversight and penalties that currently exist as just another cost of doing business.

Please vote **Ought To Pass** on LD 372. Maine workers deserve it. Thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

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