Maine Forest Products Council

The voice of Maine's forest economy

Testimony in Opposition to LD 598

"An Act to Require Minimum Pay for Reporting to Work"

April 1, 2025
Patrick Strauch, Executive Director

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, my name in Patrick Strauch and I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Forest Products Council. I am providing testimony today in opposition to LD 598, "An Act to Require Minimum Pay for Reporting to Work."

Maine's forest supports an $8.1 billion industry that sustains 33,000 jobs, which works out to roughly one out of every 24 jobs in Maine. For 65 years, the Maine Forest Products Council has served as the voice of Maine's forest economy, representing more than 300 members from all facets of the forest products industry. Our members include pulp and paper mills, sawmills, secondary wood processors, foresters, loggers and truckers. We also represent commercial landowners managing more than 8 million acres of forestland.

LD 598 language mirrors an amended version of LD 1190, which died upon adjournment last year. This bill requires two hours of pay if a worker arrives to work and is not needed. Employers with at least 10 workers would face up to a $500 fine if they were found in violation of this law.

If an employer makes a documented good faith effort to notify an employee not to report to work, they are not liable to pay wages. However, we are not sure what constitutes accepted documentation. Will an unanswered call to the employee fulfill the obligation by the employer or must an employer fill out paperwork to satisfy the law?

Additionally, the bill states that if an employee reports to work after the employer's attempt to notify the employee has been unsuccessful, the employee shall perform whatever duties are assigned by the employer at the time the employee reports to work. This section appears to be a work around of an employer's good faith effort to contact an employee to not report to work. So, if an employer documents that they tried to contact an employee and that employee still shows up, an employer is on the hook for two hours' worth of pay.

Many of these questions won't be answered until the Department of Labor promulgates rules, and as routine technical rules, the required administrative bookkeeping will not require a stamp of approval by the Legislature. If this bill does move forward, we request that these rules be major substantive.

This bill also excludes public employers from satisfying the minimum pay requirement. We believe private and public employers should be subject to the same regulations if this bill passes.

Many employees in this industry are already covered by collective bargaining agreements. We believe that decisions such as minimum pay for showing up to work should be negotiated as a part of those agreements.

For these reasons, the Maine Forest Products Council urges the committee to vote **'Ought Not to Pass'** on LD 598.

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