Maine Forest Products Council

The voice of Maine's forest economy

Testimony in Opposition to LD 60

An Act to Allow Employees to Request Flexible Work Schedules

February 5, 2025
Patrick Strauch, Executive Director

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Labor Committee. My name is Patrick Strauch. I am from Exeter and am submitting testimony today on behalf of the Maine Forest Products Council in opposition to LD 60, "An Act to Allow Employees to Request Flexible Work Schedules".

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, truckers, commercial landowners and more.

As many of you may remember, the Labor and Housing Committee worked on a similar piece of legislation during the 131st Legislature. In its original form, that bill proposed a number of requirements related to flexible scheduling and correlating fines if an employer were found to be in violation of those requirements. We appreciated the efforts made by policymakers on the Committee to amend the proposal to a more workable solution for employers and employees. The amended version ended up on the Appropriations Table where it died upon adjournment, which is why it is back before this Committee today.

With that being said, there still remain a few areas of concern to the members of the Maine Forest Products Council that appear in LD 60. Maine continues to struggle with a workforce storage and the forest products industry is not immune to this issue. In order to attract and retain good employees, our member organizations work with their employees as much as possible to provide a work schedule that works for them while still meeting the needs of the business. That includes providing flexibility to work schedules when it is practical. I think this can be said of most Maine-based businesses.

LD 60 sets into Maine law overly rigid procedures that employers must use when providing flexible schedules to their employees as well as what must be the minimum standard in any collective bargaining agreement between organizations and their workforce. We are concerned that employers could face costly civil violations if the process is not followed exactly as outlined in law. Of greater concern, a situation may arise where an employer must take disciplinary action against an employee for an issue completely unrelated to requesting a flexible schedule. A disgruntled employee may take advantage of this law and unfairly accuse an employer of taking retaliatory action against them. Although we would hope this example would be a rare occurrence, it is a real threat, nonetheless.

The Maine Forest Products Council does not believe that this legislation is needed and we respectfully request that the Committee vote 'Ought Not to Pass'. Thank you for your consideration.

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