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Testimony of Mike Roland, Bureau of Labor Standards Maine Department of Labor

In Opposition to LD 1376

**To the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing
Public Hearing, April 11, 2023**

Good afternoon, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. I'm Mike Roland, Director of the Bureau of Labor Standards at the Maine Department of Labor. I'm here today to testify in opposition to LD 1376 An Act to Create a Livable Wage by Increasing the Minimum Hourly Wage.

This bill would increase Maine's minimum wage beginning in 2024, first to \$15 per hour and then by at least one dollar per year over a period of years to \$24 dollars per hour at a minimum in 2033. It is impossible to predict what effect inflation may have during those years or what measures other states and the federal government might take to adjust their minimum wage levels between now and 2033. But it seems likely that Maine's would be among the highest at that time. And as a result of other statutory provisions, our threshold for salary exempt employees would also be quite high.

According to Title 26 section 661 regarding minimum wages, "It is the declared public policy of the State of Maine that workers employed in any occupation should receive wages sufficient to provide adequate maintenance and to protect their health, and to be fairly commensurate with the value of the services rendered." The Department appreciates the concern of the sponsor and supporters of LD 1376 that this longstanding policy be upheld, but takes no strong position on precisely what the appropriate level is for our state's minimum wage. We leave that for others to decide.

We do believe, however, that the current system, adopted by referendum in 2016, is reasonable and is working well for Maine workers and the regulated community in general. For that reason, we oppose the changes proposed in LD 1376.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have now or at a future work session.

The Maine Department of Labor is committed to serving Maine workers and businesses by helping employers recruit and train a talented workforce, providing workers with skills needed to compete in our economy, assisting individuals when jobs are lost, aiding people with disabilities reach career goals, ensuring safe and fair workplaces for people on the job and providing research and analysis of employment data to support job growth.