



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

Testimony of Whitney Parrish
Maine Women's Lobby
In opposition of LDs 612, 739, 830, 808, 425 and 1098
March 18, 2019

Senator Bellows, Representative Sylvester, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Whitney Parrish, and I am the Director of Policy and Program for the Maine Women's Lobby. We are a nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide membership organization devoted to raising the economic, social, and political status of Maine's 678,000 women and girls.

We are here to oppose LDs 612, 739, 830, 808, 425, and 1098. We support the intent of LD 670, but are not in favor of a tiered system.

According to the National Employment Law Center, women and people of color power some of the U.S.'s fastest growth sectors with median wages lower than \$15 per hour including food and beverage services, retail, home care, child care and hospitality.ⁱ Essentially, women and people of color are doing the work that is important to our economy, but they aren't at present being fairly compensated for that work.

Women make up 6 out of 10 minimum wage earners in Maine, and nearly 8 out of 10 tipped wage earners.ⁱⁱ We also disproportionately live in poverty. Poor women, women of color, rural women, immigrant women, single women, and young women have always had to and continue to work outside of the home to provide some measure of economic security for themselves and their families. Mainers knew that the minimum wage was not enough to survive, let alone thrive, and so they overwhelmingly voted to make a change. We ask you to respect the clear will and intent of the majority of Maine voters.

ⁱ Huizar, Laura and Gebreselassie, Tsedeye. What a \$15 Minimum Wage Means for Women and Workers of Color. National Employment Law Project. December 2016. Accessed at <https://www.nelp.org/wp-content/uploads/Policy-Brief-15-Minimum-Wage-Women-Workers-of-Color.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Fair Pay for Women in Maine Requires a Fair Minimum Wage. National Women's Law Center. August 2016. Accessed at <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Fair-Pay-for-Women-in-Maine-Requires-a-Fair-Minimum-Wage-July-2016.pdf>

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Many young workers do not just work to make a little extra money; they come from struggling low- to middle-income households, and their earnings provide essential household income.ⁱⁱⁱ Many are young mothers and parents or help supplement their family's income, working side-by-side with older counterparts and often doing the same work. They deserve the same wage. Additionally, living in rural Maine or working for a small business does not change the need for a living wage. Rural women across all races and ethnicities experience sizable wage gaps and significantly lower wages when compared to white men,^{iv} and lowering the minimum wage for these workers stands to perpetuate and dramatically increase these wage inequities.

The voters knew what they were voting for, and their message to you was clear: it is time for one fair wage. Any efforts to lower the minimum wage for certain workers only stand to harm them, their families, and our economy. Thank you for your time.

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, 2012-2016.

^{iv} Frye, Jocelyn, McGrew, Annie, and Gallagher Robbins, Katherine. The Gender Wage Gap Among Rural Workers. Center for American Progress. 2018.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/news/2018/04/10/449284/gender-wage-gap-among-rural-workers/>

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