

March 7, 2019

Paid sick leave bill to make its way to full legislature

In a politically-charged vote, democrats on the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing brushed aside the concerns of the small business community and voted to send a mandatory paid sick leave proposal to the full Legislature.

Supported by all eight Democrats on the committee, the majority report on **LD 369, *An Act to Support Healthy Workplaces and Healthy Families by Providing Earned Paid Sick Leave to Certain Employees***, sponsored by Sen.

Rebecca Millett (D-Cumberland), will require that any business with five or more employees accrue one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours of work, up to a limit of 40 hours in a year. The employee would also be allowed to roll over up to 40 hours of unused leave into the next year, but again, the employer can cap leave used at 40 hours. The leave begins to accrue upon initiation of work, but the employee cannot use the leave until they have been employed at least 90 days. The employee

at an impacted business would be eligible to use the leave to take care of themselves or a sick family member, or if the employee or a member of the employee's family has been the victim of domestic abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.

The committee's public hearing on the bill was held last Monday, February 25 and went almost six hours. The bill's sponsor passed out an amended version of the bill, although it differed from the original only marginally. Legislators heard extremely compelling testimony from a number of impacted small businesses from around the state. Many of these were tourism-related businesses, as well as farmers and boat builders. While many of these people were sympathetic to the goals of the bill, the additional cost of providing the leave, combined with recent increases in the cost of doing business associated with the minimum wage hikes, will make doing so difficult, if not impossible.

After the public hearing, the Maine State Chamber and a number of other impacted business associations were asked to participate in a stakeholder meeting to discuss how the bill could be improved to accommodate the concerns brought up by the small business at the hearing. The Maine State Chamber, along with other participants, both proponent and opponent, were asked to provide a written list of changes that they believe would improve the bill. The Maine State Chamber's suggested changes included:

- ♦ Narrowing the definition of "family member" as the current definition is far too broad;
- ♦ Narrowing the reasons for the uses of

Chamber president to testify before Congress

Dana Connors to present testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Small Business about rural broadband access and digitizing rural America

Dana Connors, president of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, will testify before the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Small Business on Wednesday, March 13, at 11:30 a.m. located at 2123 Rayburn House Office Building on unlocking the digital potential of rural America. Congressman Jared Golden from Maine's Second Congressional District serves on the Committee on Small Business.

Maine is the most rural state in America – more than 60% of Maine's population lives in a rural area, and 98% of the state is rural land area. The Maine State Chamber is viewed as a national leader on advocating for private-public solutions to help in reaching underserved, rural areas of Maine with high-speed broadband access. Connors will provide Congress with real stories of the success of growing businesses with the help of digital tools and the need to continue on our path of digital growth in rural Maine and America. His testimony will highlight a report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Technology Engagement Center entitled *Unlocking the Digital Potential of Rural America*.

While in Washington, Connors will be meeting with members of Maine's congressional delegation on what can be done on the federal level to help continue the build-out of rural broadband infrastructure in Maine. If you have any questions about his testimony before Congress or rural broadband access, please contact Ben Gilman by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 111, or by emailing bgilman@mainechamber.org. □

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Chairman of the Board of Directors:

Charles "Wick" Johnson

President: Dana F. Connors

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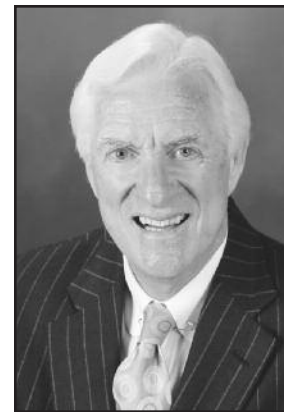
About the Maine State Chamber of Commerce:

Since 1889, the Maine State Chamber has been fighting to lower your cost of doing business. Through our Grassroots Action Network and OneVoice program, we work with a network of approximately 5,000 companies statewide who see the value in such a service and provide the financial support that keeps our access, advocacy, and assistance efforts going strong. As Maine's Chamber, we make sure that the business environment of the state continues to thrive. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce advocates on behalf of their interests before the legislature and regulatory agencies and through conferences, seminars, and affiliated programs.

A message from the president...

“Good intentions often produce unintended consequences...”

by Dana Connors



The legislature has been in session for approximately two months now, and the pace is now fast and furious. Committees are tackling big issues – paid sick leave, product stewardship, workers’ comp, education standards, the state budget, bottle bill changes, health care mandates, to name just a few.

There are just as many issues to divide us as there are to unite us. Essentially, we all want good things for our state and the people that choose to live, work and play here. For us at the chamber, the smallest common denominator is the stability of meaningful, sustainable jobs for our citizens.

Indulge me for a moment. I recently read that 75% of Maine small businesses employ 10 or fewer people; 80% employ 20 or fewer people; and, 90% employ 50 or fewer people. Considering that the national threshold for defining a small business is 500 employees, most of Maine’s employers likely fall into this category. These jobs are often the heart and soul of a community in a rural state like ours – neighbors employing neighbors. They, and Maine’s larger employers as well, eat, shop, hire and contract services locally.

As we consider legislation before us this session, debate its nuances, and wrestle to determine the best outcomes for our state, let’s also keep in mind that good intentions often produce unintended consequences. While many of the issues before us are noble in their spirit, the outcomes and their effect on the foundations of our economy – stable and sustainable jobs – could be negatively impacted. Jobs that are productive and meaningful are important to the well-being of our people, as are issues such as increased wages and added benefits. However, the viability of the business itself must also be considered. With companies operating on small margins, every good intention can often produce unintended consequences if balance is not a factor in policy changes.

We encourage you to interact and build relationships with your legislators locally – invite them to tour your business and meet your employees. We’re also available to help you make those connections at the statehouse and to support you in testifying before a legislative committee. And don’t miss the chance to connect with legislators next week at our annual Business Day at the Statehouse on Thursday, March 14 (see page 6).

As legislators are working diligently to meet their deadlines, we are also rolling up our sleeves and tackling these issues on our members’ behalf. Our team of five advocates has a collective 125 years of experience in the legislative arena, and they work for you every day. Together, we are the voice of Maine business! □

Bill would dramatically alter Maine's overtime threshold

By 2022, salaried employees would need to make \$55,224



ACTION ALERT!

As we reported last week, a bill is headed to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing that will significantly increase the salary threshold that separates hourly versus salaried employees – far more significantly than even the Obama administration's proposal in 2016. **LD 402, *An Act to Restore Overtime Protections to Maine Workers***, sponsored by Rep. Ryan Tipping (D-Orono), proposes the increase the overtime threshold by \$22,224 over a four-year period, finally landing on \$55,224 by 2022, and then indexing the threshold each year thereafter by the second quartile of usual weekly earnings for employed full-time wage and salary workers as published by the United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. **The bill has been scheduled for public hearing on Monday, March 11 at 9:00 a.m. in Room 202 of the Cross Building.** Passage of this bill would be catastrophic for thousands of for-profit and non-profit businesses of all sizes, across the state of Maine.

Referred to as the "overtime" threshold, or alternately as the "salaried" threshold, it is the monetary dividing line between employees who are considered salaried/exempt for the purposes of overtime pay, and those who are hourly workers and therefore eligible for overtime pay after working 40 hours in a week. As drafted, LD 402 would increase Maine's threshold from its current level of \$33,000 to \$40,408 in 2020, then increase it again to \$47,816 in 2021, and finally to \$55,224 in 2022.

Since 2009, Maine's monetary dividing line separating hourly/non-exempt ver-

sus salaried/exempt has been tied to changes in Maine's minimum wage. At that time, Title 26 was amended to create a threshold that is 3000 times the state's minimum wage. While the federal threshold is currently set at \$22,660, Maine's threshold has climbed to its current level of \$33,000. With the next scheduled increase in Maine's minimum wage (to \$12 an hour) set for 2020, the threshold will again climb to \$36,000. It will continue to increase, as Maine's minimum wage is indexed by changes to the CPI here yearly.

In 2015 and 2016, the final two years of President Barack Obama's tenure, he directed the U.S. Department of Labor to undertake rulemaking to adjust the threshold nationally. The process was a contentious one, with the U.S. Department of Labor receiving literally hundreds of thousands of comments on the subject from employers and labor groups alike. After an initial recommendation of roughly \$52,000, the department issued threshold guidelines increasing the amount from \$23,660 to \$47,467, to take effect in 2016.

Not surprisingly, this represented a significant jump for many employers across the nation, and a particularly huge leap for many small businesses, who were paying salaried employees more than \$23,660, but less than \$47,467 (or \$912 per week). Employers balked, both at the amount and the small timeframe given to adjust salaries – or demote workers to hourly status.

Again, not surprisingly litigation ensued, and in August 2017, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas later invalidated this regulation on

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Chamber opposes estate tax bills that propose to roll back exclusion amounts

On Wednesday, March 6, Linda Caprara testified on behalf of the Maine State Chamber in opposition to two bills, **LD 420, *An Act to Amend the Maine Exclusion Amount in the Estate Tax***, sponsored by Rep. Benjamin Collings (D-Portland), and **LD 518, *An Act Change the Exclusion Amount under the Estate Tax***, sponsored by Rep. Brooks (D-Lewiston). The Maine State Chamber opposes both bills for the very same reasons – it is a tax increase. LD 420 bill lowers the exclusion amount of a Maine estate that is exempt under Maine's estate tax from \$5.6 million to \$2 million, and LD 518 lowers the exclusion amount to \$1 million.

The Maine State Chamber has always been on record for increasing the estate tax exclusion amount or eliminating the estate tax altogether. The Chamber testified that the estate tax hurts Maine businesses, particularly smaller businesses and farms, who work very hard to pass long assets to their children and grandchildren. These bills would take away that opportunity and instead slap them with a massive death tax. Taxes due would have to be paid up front, forcing heirs to deplete any capital they have in the business or sell it to pay the tax. Essentially, the estate tax may result in double taxation because you end up paying taxes on assets and property that may have already been taxed. Ultimately, it punishes and penalizes success.

In addition, Caprara testified that that increasing the estate tax would encourage retirees to leave the state, taking their assets and domiciles out of Maine permanently. She also mentioned that the Legislature took significant steps back in 2015 as part of tax reform to increase the exemption amount in recognition of the penalizing estate tax.

The work session on these bills is scheduled for Wed., March 13 at 10:00 a.m. in the Taxation committee. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Caprara by calling (207) 623-4568 or by emailing lcaprara@mainechamber.org. □

Paid Sick Leave...


(Continued from Page 1...)

- the leave as they are also far too broad;
- Defining a cap to the accrual of hours for the leave. As drafted, the bill would allow someone to accrue up to almost 70 hours of sick time. While the employer could cap the paid portion at 40 hours, that would take an affirmative action by the employer;
 - Carving out language in any draft to provide for employers with PTO – a critical point;
 - Limiting the leave to FTEs only. What constitutes “full time employment” can be discussed but this leave should not consider part time or seasonal employees as eligible;
 - Increasing the threshold number of employees at a covered business;
 - Strengthening the way that documenting the leave occurs to prevent its abuse;
 - Not requiring employers who can’t afford to offer health insurance to pay for a doctor’s note out of their own pocket, when in actuality, they are actually paying for the whole doctor’s visit out of pocket at cost of charges if they are paying for a note;
 - Front-loading the leave after the 90-day threshold is reached, if limited to only full-time employees, because tracking the leave based on hours worked will be administratively burdensome; and,
 - Providing a municipal preemption.

The stakeholders’ meeting took place on Monday afternoon, March 4, and included more than 25 participants. After an hour of discussion, it became clear that other than a few small changes, proponents of the bill were unwilling to make some of the critical amendments small businesses would need to make the bill affordable and workable. The chair of the meeting and the bill’s sponsor, Sen. Millett, indicated she needed time to think over the discussion. From the position of the Chamber, it seemed likely that at least one more meeting would be held to see if any further agreement could be reached.

That didn’t happen.

Instead, at the bill’s work session on Wednesday, March 6, the Labor and Housing committee passed out a third version of the bill – one unseen by the



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Republican members or the business community – and went through new changes, then moved directly to a vote.

Republicans caucused and returned to the committee with an offer of their own, incorporating all of the important suggested changes from the business community. There was an attempt to move the question by the House chair, thereby stifling any further discussion of either proposal, but that procedural motion failed.

After several back and forth attempts, Democrats rejected the Republicans final offer because the committee recommendation would not be unanimous, with one member of the Republican caucus dissenting. The eight members of the democrat caucus supported their majority report, with four republicans supporting their own “ought to pass” report, and one republican a straight “ought not to pass.”

So how does each report differ?

The Majority Report...

As indicated, the majority report impacts any business with five or more employees for more than 13 weeks of the

year. What is not clear is whether these weeks are consecutive, or in total. Both full- and part-time employees, as well as seasonal workers, are entitled to earn up to 69.3 hours of leave in a year, but the use of the leave can be capped at 40 hours by the employers. The majority report did clarify their definition of paid time off (PTO); that notice/info of leave can be provided electronically; the earned pay is the base rate of pay; and, added a section affecting employers with a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) in place. The CBA section seems to allow any union workers who have chosen to bargain away sick days for other more highly sought after priorities to also earn sick pay, regardless if the CBA says otherwise.

Other significant problems that remain in the majority report include the low threshold of five employees; the inclusion of full- and part-time workers; the very broad definition of family, as well as the allowable reasons for taking sick time off; the requirement that employers pay for doctor’s visit costs or co-pays when requiring substantiation for

Continued on Page 6...

Overtime Rules... (Continued from Page 3...)

the basis that the \$47,456 annual salary (\$913 per week) was so high as to render the duties tests for exemption irrelevant.

This is extremely important – because who is considered exempt from overtime eligibility versus those who qualify for overtime pay is a *two-pronged test* – the aforementioned pay test and a duties test. In addition to the minimum salary level, employees must also perform certain duties to qualify for the Fair Labor Standards Act's white collar (executive, administrative and professional) exemption. The court found that the duties tests were the more appropriate representation of Congressional intent for exemption, and that the salary test was to serve merely as a proxy, or shorthand, for the duties test. The court ruled that the salary test was increased so much as to make the duties test irrelevant, and that the new salary test would render non-exempt those employees who should be exempt due to the duties they perform.

With the huge salary threshold leaps LD 402 would require of Maine employers, the bill appears to make the same mistake. The ultimate level of more than \$55,000 is even higher than the final Obama threshold level of more than \$47,000, and higher than California's threshold level of \$49,000 – thereby making Maine the highest threshold in the nation. In addition, the indexing provision of the bill links it to a *national income level* which will, by definition, not be in sync with Maine's.

There was considerable concern expressed by employers with respect to the 2016 federal regulations what would certainly apply to LD 402 beyond cost. Many workers currently considered salaried or management employees would likely see their position converted to hourly. Employers would just not be able to keep pace with the salary adjustments necessary to maintain exempt status, which, leads to several unintended consequences.

First, it created considerable morale issues in the workplace. Previously salaried workers felt demoted and that their career trajectory had been stunted due to the change. Second, employers had to retool their workforce, all the while trying to maintain productivity. Employees who found themselves moving from salaried to hourly were asked to turn in cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc., and instructed to conduct no work after hours – even if their work ethic motivated them to continue to do so, and thereby negatively impacting productivity.

In the non-profit world, if LD 402 becomes law, the impact could be equally destructive – particularly for charitable non-profits. These groups survive on contributions, and in some cases, contracts with local governments to provide services. So, they are not necessarily able to go out and raise more revenue to cover these increased labor costs, particularly the amount necessary to cover the increases envisioned by LD 402. People working for these groups generally do so because they believe in the mission of helping others; they understand that they will not be making as much as other employees. In many cases, jacking up the salary thresholds for exempt employees means they will no longer be able to work the longer and irregular hours providing these services demands. The same holds true for local governments, whose only method of raising revenues to cover LD 402's increases would be to raise property taxes on their citizenry.

LD 402 will significantly increase to cost of doing business for nearly every employer – for profit or non-profit, large or small – operating in Maine. Furthermore, it will make Maine an outlier compared to the other 49 states who have not imposed such standards on their employers. This bill will certainly hurt Maine's ability to attract new businesses, new jobs, and new opportunities for our citizens. The Maine State Chamber will be strongly opposing LD 402 when it comes up for public hearing. For additional information or questions, please contact Peter Gore by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 107, or by emailing pgore@mainechamber.org. □

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Paid Sick Leave...

(Continued from Page 4...)

the use of the leave; no municipal pre-emption language; and, a private right of action against an employer accused of violating the rights of the employee.

The Republican Minority Report...

The Republican minority report is a proposal that the Maine State Chamber believes meets the proponents of the bill half way. It contains a threshold of 15 or more employers; more narrowly defines the definition of family; requires worker attachment of 30 hours per week and 150 days of employment before they may access the leave; begins accrual at a 40-hour week; no private right of action; a municipal preemption; excluded seasonal, youth and per diem workers; eliminates the requirement that employers pay for doctor's notes after three consecutive days of absence; and, sets an annual accrual rate of a hard 40 hours.

It is unclear what drove the Democrats to push through a vote on such an important public policy issue like mandatory paid sick leave in such an expedited fashion. While passage of this proposal has long been a goal of the majority, the speed in which the small business testimony was disregarded by the committee in order to adhere to some arbitrary deadline to pass the bill out of committee was striking. The stated goal of the stakeholder meeting was good public policy. That's not what happened at the committee level or in the majority report on the bill.

We will be monitoring the progress of the bill through the legislative process. As a business of any size, you should be extremely concerned with the specter of passage of the majority report in its current form. The Maine State Chamber urges its members to contact the Governor's office, your locally elected officials, and legislative leadership, urging them to fix the proposal into something that the vast number of impacted employers in this state – small businesses – can live with.

For questions or additional information, please contact Peter Gore by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 107, or by emailing pgore@mainechamber.org. □

2019 Business Day at the Statehouse

***Thursday, March 14 | 8:00 am to Noon
Hall of Flags, Second Floor, Maine State House, Augusta***



Employers and employees welcome ... PLEASE JOIN US!

You are invited to the Maine State Chamber of Commerce's annual Business Day at the Statehouse on Thursday, March 14, 2019 (Snow date: May 2, 2019), from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the Hall of Flags (Statehouse, Second Floor).

Business Day at the Statehouse provides a prime opportunity for our members, and their employees, to discuss business issues and priorities with legislators and state government officials, as we work together to strengthen Maine's economy and keep Maine competitive. Participants have the unique opportunity to connect face-to-face with legislators. Employers often use this time to emphasize the importance of preserving and retaining existing jobs, strengthening Maine's economy through the creation of new opportunities, and keeping Maine businesses competitive in today's economy.

With your participation, the "Voice of Maine Business" will resonate throughout Augusta!

We anticipate another great turnout this year! Please RSVP today by visiting www.mainechamber.org/eventdetail.php?ID=97. If you have additional questions, please email lcaprara@mainechamber.org.

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Facing an enormous workforce shortage, Maine needs an easier pathway for skilled credentialed immigrants to enter our workforce

The Maine State Chamber testified recently in support of Rep. Denise Tepler's (D-Topsham) bill, **LD 769**, *Resolve, To Direct the Commissioner of Professional and Financial Regulation To Create a Working Group To Study Credentialing Skilled Individuals with Foreign Credentials*. The bill was heard in front of the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business (IDEA) committee.

As a member of the MaineSpark coalition, the Maine State Chamber supports Maine's goal that by the year 2025, 60% of adults in Maine's workforce will hold a postsecondary degree or credential of value in demand by Maine employers.

Maine is faced with a workforce shortage across all sectors and regions, by 2025 Maine will need approximately 158,000 more workers than exist here today. For a state facing an enormous workforce shortage we need to create an easier pathway for skilled credentialed immigrants to enter our workforce.

Today Maine is home to roughly 49,000 immigrants. For many business owners, immigrant workers have been a vital reason why their businesses have been able to thrive in recent years despite the rapidly aging native-born population.

Maine must make it easier for immigrants with advanced educations and skill sets to enter our workforce. It would be a shame if Maine continued to ignore these employment barriers and for the expertise that brought these skilled workers to Maine to go to waste. Many highly-skilled, college-educated immigrants often encounter a series of obstacles when they try to find jobs in their credentialed career. This often leads to these people settling for lower-skill and lower-pay positions because they are unable to make full use of their academic and professional credentials.

As education-attainment levels rise in the modern economy, there is an increasing employer emphasis on the need for well-trained and well-educated employees. For job-seeking immigrants with academic credentials earned outside the United States, it is therefore vital that they receive accurate, trusted, and easily understood evaluations of their prior education.

Five U.S. state governors (IL, MD, MA, NJ, WA) have signed executive orders to address the needs of immigrant communities. As a first step, each governor has ordered the creation of an advisory commission or council to conduct research into the needs of their state's immigrant populations in order to develop recommendations to improve immigrant integration in areas related to workforce development.

Policies designed to improve the recognition and transferability of foreign credentials are imperative to better integrating skilled immigrants into our workforce and to assist in closing the gaps in Maine's workforce shortage.

For additional information or questions, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing msanborn@mainechamber.org. □

Funding for Head Start, an important component of Maine's system of early care and education programs, is critical to future success

The Appropriations and Financial Affairs committee began its process of budget hearings this week. The Department of Health and Human Services was the first department to hold public hearings. Head Start programs were one of the areas reviewed on Tuesday, March 5. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce testified in support of Maine's Head Start programs. Both the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and ReadyNation are members of the statewide MaineSpark Coalition. Head Start is an important component of Maine's system of early care and education programs that make up the continuum of programming needed by many of Maine's youngest and most at-risk learners, and an important building block to help strengthen Maine's future workforce and our economy.

Maine business leaders believe strongly that education is the single most important investment that can be made to ensure successful participation in the new, knowledge-based economy, earnings growth, and improved health status. Just as post-secondary education and training are critical building blocks to ensure success in the workforce, high-quality early education like Head Start are vital building blocks to ensure success from kindergarten to post-secondary education.

Education is a critical investment in Maine people and in our economy and should be treated as such, through a coordinated approach starting with early

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Head Start / Budget... (Continued from Page 7...)

learning. Ensuring that all students arrive at Kindergarten socially, emotionally, and cognitively ready to learn is an important first step and merits state investments. A 2017 research report by ReadyNation shows that children who participate in high-quality early learning programs like Head Start have greater success and are:

- ♦ 35 percent more likely to graduate from high school;
- ♦ Four times more likely to graduate from a four-year college; and,
- ♦ 42 percent more likely to be employed consistently as adults.

These numbers translate into an unbeatable long-term rate of return – up to \$16 for every \$1 invested.

As stated in the Maine State Chamber of Commerce / Maine Development Foundation joint *Making Maine Work* report “Investment in Young Children = Real Economic Development,” for Maine people to truly reach their potential, it all starts at birth. Waiting to invest in Maine’s most precious assets, our children, until they enter our K-12 system is, for many, too late. To attain our vision of a high quality of life for all Maine people we must ensure that each and every Maine child has access to high-quality care and education from birth. Investment in early education *IS* real economic development. It’s not just a social and moral imperative, it is an economic imperative.

With Maine’s lack of population growth, we need every child today to grow up to be vibrant members of Maine’s future workforce and contribute to our economy.

For additional information or questions, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing msanborn@mainechamber.org. □



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Submit confidential inquiries to UMSChancellor@academicsearch.com. Review will begin promptly and continue until an appointment is made. To ensure full consideration, applications should be received by March 18, 2019. The University of Maine System is an EEO/AA employer.



Department of Economic & Community Development

New research shows education program achieves impressive results for underserved students

— The results, released by JMG and state leaders, demonstrate the positive impact JMG has on thousands of Maine students who are economically disadvantaged, in foster care, or have a disability

State and community leaders, lawmakers, and students gathered at the State House Hall of Flags on Tuesday, March 5 to hear the results of a year-long study on the impact the JMG program has had on thousands of students each year. JMG is Maine's only education-based, statewide nonprofit offering a continuum of support to students from middle school through post-secondary education and onto career pathways. It has been recognized for 23 consecutive years for its high student outcomes, including a 92% high school graduation rate. Research studies released today, conducted by Stepwise Data Research of Yarmouth and American Institute for Research in Washington D.C., provide new insight into the JMG model and the difference it can make in the lives of students who face significant barriers.

For example, 17% of students with disabilities drop out of high school every year, and only 10% have college degrees six years later. And, the prospects for youth in foster care are even worse, with fewer than 3% graduating from college.

JMG serves hundreds of students with these same barriers, and the research shows JMG is making a clear difference. After identifying a group of more than 27,000 students with disabilities enrolled in high school between 2005 -2013, results showed that students who enroll in JMG are 17 percentage points more likely to graduate than students with disabilities who are not JMG participants.

"Less than 80% of economically disadvantaged students in Maine graduate from high school, and only 20% earn a college degree after six years," says Craig Larrabee, president and CEO of JMG (pictured below). "The majority of students in JMG are economically disadvantaged, yet according to this new research, despite their barriers, they are succeeding. In fact, the average wages for JMG students from the Class of 2010 doubled in the first six years after graduation. And, for the Class of 2009, average wages increased by more than 130%. This is good news. And, it's happening because of the shared commitment of our public

Continued on Page 10...



For the most current information, visit www.mainechamber.org

Raising the minimum salary for teachers will allow Maine to better compete with surrounding states and to grow workforce

— Funding for LD 405 should not create more of a tax burden on Mainers

The Maine State Chamber testified recently in support of **LD 405**, *An Act To Increase The Statewide Minimum Salary For Teachers*, on Monday that was heard in front of the Education and Cultural Affairs committee. Maine's business community is incredibly invested in our state's PreK-12 public education system. Our students, our teachers, and the entire system deserve our investment. We appreciate all the hard work our public schools, learning communities, and teachers are doing to prepare and graduate students that are well-prepared for college and the workplace.

Other states are considering measures to attract and retain teachers, as nearly every state is facing teacher shortages in math and special education, and in rural and city schools. These policies include forgiving student loans, increasing pay in hard-to-staff schools, creating so-called "grow your own" programs to recruit and train teachers from communities with shortages, and developing tiered licensure and career ladders.

Teacher salaries in some parts of the state lag those of other professions. These earnings are often linked to high teacher turnover or insufficient quality in the workforce. The Maine State Chamber supports increasing the minimum salary for teachers throughout the state. However, the Maine State Chamber will be paying close attention on how this will

Continued on Page 11...

schools, our legislature, and employers to put students first. And, while JMG is proud of the 9,000 students we serve every year, there are so many more out there who need help in order to reach their potential and become productive adults.”

“I am a long-time supporter of JMG,” says Senate President Troy Jackson. “As the father of a young son that didn’t have a whole lot of interest in going to high school, JMG went out of its way to keep him engaged. They did everything they could to make sure his interest was sparked. As a parent, I couldn’t be more appreciative of what they did for my son. And, it’s clear from this study, they are doing the same for thousands of students across the state. It is a tremendous program.”

With two-thirds of the jobs in Maine requiring post-secondary credentials by next year, it is imperative that we do all we can to ensure students not only enroll in college – but have the support they need to stay in school and earn a degree. With support from the Harold Alfond foundation, JMG’s College Success Program is working with former JMG high school students, foster care youth, and high school drop outs who went on to earn a high school equivalency. According to this study, two-thirds of the students in our programs who enrolled in college from 2015 – 2017 are still in school today, and 85% are either still in college or working full-time.

“These statistics give us hope,” says Senator Lisa Keim. “While we still have a lot of work to do to reach and engage *all* of Maine’s young people, we are making progress. And, this progress is the shared result of many people’s efforts. I want to thank JMG’s school partners for their commitment, and the generosity of so many private funders who match public funds, greatly increasing the capacity of JMG’s direct services to students.”

With the release of this new data, JMG is reaffirming its commitment to Maine’s youth. The organization intends to use this research to refine its programming to better support students with barriers; particularly those who are economically disadvantaged, living with a disability, or in foster care.

Continued on Page 11...

Campus Career Connect needs you! Career Mentoring for Students with Disabilities



Campus Career Connect (C3) is an online group mentoring program where college students with a disability can connect with professional mentors and get help reaching their career goals.

- ◆ Students spend time each week chatting online with career mentors
- ◆ Monthly webinars on various career-readiness topics
- ◆ Networking opportunities, resume feedback, and ongoing support
- ◆ Open to any student with a disability from Maine or studying in Maine



The Maine State Chamber of Commerce has partnered with Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) in an online career mentoring program for students with disabilities. The program, Campus Career Connect (C3), is an online group mentoring program where college students with a disability can connect with professional mentors and get help reaching their career goals. Students spend time each week chatting online with career mentors. Students and mentors are able to participate in monthly webinars on various career-readiness topics and have access to networking opportunities, resume feedback, and ongoing support. This program is open to any student with a disability from Maine or studying in Maine. The Chamber is seeking for employer mentors to join the program and participate in the mentoring program. Sign up today at C3.PYD.org via phone, tablet, or computer. □

Want to be a mentor?

Please contact Megan Sanborn or Kelsey Morrell by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108 or ext. 104, or by emailing msanborn@mainechamber.org or kmorrell@mainechamber.org.

For additional information, check out C3.PYD.org or contact Deep by emailing dchinappa@pyd.org



Maine Economic Research Institute provides economic facts to inform Maine businesses on legislative outcomes —

For more than 20 years, the Maine Economic Research Institute (MERI) continues its mission of holding legislators accountable on the key votes that impact the business community and our state's economy. This is a critical year, with the new Mills' administration at its beginning and with many new legislators submitting and supporting bills that were previously heard but weren't passed under the previous administration.

A primary focus of MERI is providing information on how Maine state legislators perform on key economic issues during each legislative session. Bills considered in legislator MERI ratings include critical economic issues, including education initiatives, tax policies economic development, health care, workforce, transportation, and much more. Selected legislation is driven by what employers say is critical to their success, their ability to create jobs, and what is fundamental to growing Maine's economy. The legislation is tracked using voting information on the public record. MERI's premier publication is *Roll Call*, is published after each legislative session and distributed to all MERI subscribers, affiliate associations and released to the media and legislators. The only objective-based rating system that determines how policy in Augusta impacts our economy, MERI is committed to a healthy Maine economy and quality jobs.

MERI continues to be affiliated with 11 statewide business associations that help distribute the *Roll Call* publication. The larger the audience to which we get the scores and our message out, the bigger impact MERI has, and that is the goal of MERI. Ultimately, MERI's influence comes from its subscribers' support and that is where you come in.

If you aren't familiar with MERI, it is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, independent research and analysis organization developed to report on how state policies affect Maine's economy and our state's ability to grow and thrive. MERI works diligently to represent all Maine employers on key economic issues. MERI supports itself through subscribers to its data. Members of MERI's affiliate associations represent thousands of Maine businesses in every sector of Maine's economy.

For additional information, questions or if you would like to become involved with MERI, please contact Peter Gore by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 107, or by emailing pgore@mainechamber.org. □

Teacher Salaries... (Continued from Page 9...)

be funded. Governor Janet Mills included an additional \$10 million in her proposed biennial budget, but the funding in LD 405 is unspecified. The Maine State Chamber certainly doesn't want to create more of a tax burden on Mainers.

Maine is in desperate need of growing our workforce. Efforts are needed that assist in attracting, recruiting, and retaining credentialed individuals to our workforce. Increasing the number of educators and those going to school to be future educators are a piece of the solution. Raising the minimum salary for teachers will allow Maine to better compete with surrounding states and to grow our workforce.

For additional information or questions, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing msanborn@mainechamber.org. □

JMG... (Continued from Page 10...)

"Before I had the support from JMG, I was unsuccessful in college," says Faith Mishkin, a student enrolled in JMG's College Success program. Mishkin spent time in foster care before she was adopted as an older youth. "With JMG's support, I am now graduating with an Associate's degree in liberal arts from Southern Maine Community College. JMG is also helping me to bridge to the University of Southern Maine, where I will continue in the JMG College Success program as I pursue my bachelor's degree in social work, and then a master's degree in policy management." □

JMG is a statewide, private nonprofit that partners with public schools and private businesses to offer results-driven solutions to ensure all Maine students graduate, attain post-secondary credentials and pursue meaningful careers. JMG provides more than 9,000 students a year with the skills and experience they will need to reach their potential. JMG graduates become engaged members of their communities, productive adults in the workforce, and contributors to Maine's economy. For more information, please visit www.jmg.org or call (207) 620-7180.

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Public Hearings

Public hearings are open to everyone. This public hearing schedule is subject to change. Questions may be directed to the Secretary of the Senate's Office at (207) 287-1540. For the most current schedule, please visit <http://legislature.maine.gov/committee/#Committees> or contact the committee clerk.

Monday, March 11, 2019

Appropriations and Financial Affairs 10:00 a.m.; State House, Room 228

LD 1001, An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2019, June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2021 (Rep. Gattine of Westbrook)

Labor and Housing

9:00 a.m.; Cross Building, Room 202

LD 402, An Act To Restore Overtime Protections for Maine Workers (Rep. Tipping of Orono)

LD 857, An Act To Increase Accountability for Wage Violations (Rep. Collings of Portland)

LD 888, An Act To Provide Workplace Support to Individuals with Hearing Loss (Rep. Warren of Hallowell)

Labor and Housing

2:00 p.m.; Cross Building, Room 202

LD 1013, An Act To Clarify the Disqualification from Unemployment Benefits of a Person Who Is Terminated from Employment for Being Under the Influence of Marijuana (Sen. Cyrway of Kennebec)

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

Appropriations and Financial Affairs 1:00 p.m.; State House, Room 228

LD 1001, An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2019, June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2021 (Rep. Gattine of Westbrook)

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Appropriations and Financial Affairs 10:00 a.m.; State House, Room 228

LD 1001, An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2019, June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2021 (Rep. Gattine of Westbrook)

Environment and Natural Resources

10:00 a.m.; Cross Building, Room 216

LD 797, An Act To Limit Greenhouse Gas Pollution and Effectively Use Maine's Natural Resources (Rep. Tucker of Brunswick)

LD 818, An Act To Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Sen. Sanborn of Cumberland)

LD 893, An Act To Create an Updated Unified Maine Climate Action Plan (Sen. Dill of Penobscot)

Taxation

10:00 a.m.; State House, Room 127

LD 420 (Work Session), An Act To Amend the Maine Exclusion Amount in the Estate Tax (Rep. Collings of Portland)

LD 518 (Work Session), An Act To Change the Exclusion Amount under the Estate Tax (Rep. Brooks of Lewiston)

LD 854 (Work Session), An Act To Improve Tax Incentives for Broadband Service (Rep. Ackley of Monmouth)

Taxation

1:00 p.m.; State House, Room 127

LD 107, An Act To Lower the Maine Individual Income Tax Incrementally to Zero (Rep. Hanley of Pittston)

LD 903, An Act To Improve Corporate Tax Fairness by Amending the Rates Imposed on Corporate Income (Rep. Cuddy of Winterport)

LD 905, An Act To Exempt Long-term Capital Gains from Income Tax for Certain Income Levels (Rep. Larsen-Daughtry of Brunswick)

Continued on Page 13...

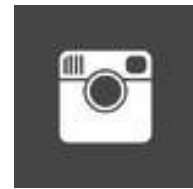
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A LECTURE BY

Donna M. De Carolis

Thursday, April 4, 2019 at 4 p.m. | Innovation Hall

UNE Portland Campus | 716 Stevens Avenue

Reception immediately following the lecture

Donna Marie De Carolis, Ph.D., is the founding Dean of the Charles D. Close School of Entrepreneurship and the Silverman Family Professor of Entrepreneurial Leadership at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

For More Information: www.une.edu/lectures/merrilllecture or call (207) 602-2306



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Public Hearings... *(Continued from Page 13...)*

LD 963, An Act To Exempt Overtime Pay from Individual Income Tax (Rep. Grignon of Athens)

LD 977, An Act To Restore the Super Credit for Substantially Increased Research and Development (Rep. Hepler of Woolwich)

Thursday, March 14, 2019

Appropriations and Financial Affairs

1:00 p.m.; State House, Room 228

LD 1001, An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2019, June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2021 (Rep. Gattine of Westbrook)

Energy Utilities and Technology

1:00 p.m.; Cross Building, Room 211

LD 334, An Act To Change the Definition of "Renewable Capacity Resource" (Rep. Babine of Scarborough)

LD 754, An Act To Ensure the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Trust Fund Continues To Promote Energy Efficiency and Benefit Maine Ratepayers (Rep. Wadsworth of Hiram)

LD 950, An Act To Develop a State Energy Plan To Provide a Pathway to an Energy Portfolio Free of Fossil Fuels (Rep. Devin of Newcastle)

Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

1:00 p.m.; Cross Building, Room 220

LD 705, An Act Regarding the Process for Obtaining Prior Authorization for Health Insurance Purposes (Sen. Gratwick of Penobscot)

LD 942, An Act To Require Reimbursement for Medical Marijuana (Rep. Collings of Portland)

LD 1009, An Act To Provide Protections for Maine Patients Facing Step Therapy (Rep. Warren of Hallowell)

Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business

1:00 p.m.; Cross Building, Room 202

LD 769 (Work Session) Resolve, To Direct the Commissioner of Professional and Financial Regulation To Create a Working Group To Study Credentialing Skilled Individuals with Foreign Credentials (Rep. Tepler of Topsham)

Friday, March 15, 2019

Appropriations and Financial Affairs

10:00 a.m.; State House, Room 228

LD 1001, An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2019, June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2021 (Rep. Gattine of Westbrook)

Continued on Page 16...

Digest of New Legislation

Maine Chamber staff have studied each of these recently printed bills to assess potential impact on business trends. If you have concerns regarding any bill, please communicate those concerns to a member of our governmental services staff at (207) 623-4568.

A total of 224 business-related bills have been tracked to date since the session began on January 2, 2019!

BOND ISSUES

LD 923, An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Upgrade Municipal Culverts at Stream Crossings. (Speaker Gideon, D-Freeport) *Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.* The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of \$5,000,000, will be used for a competitive grant program that matches local funding for the upgrade of municipal culverts at stream crossings in order to enhance and restore rivers, streams and fish and wildlife habitats and to allow communities to better prepare for extreme storms and floods.

BUSINESS REGULATION

LD 1087, An Act To Keep Maine Businesses Competitive. (Sen. Hamper, R-Oxford) *Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Commerce.* A concept draft, this bill proposes to keep Maine businesses competitive.

LD 1112, An Act To Provide Employee Vaccination Compensation. (Rep. Fecteau, R-Augusta) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing.* This bill establishes the right of an employee to refuse any vaccine required or recommended by the employer without coercion, consequence or retaliation by the employer and the employee's right to receive the vaccination at the employee's workplace and at the expense of the employer. It also requires the employer to compensate the employee for any medical expenses incurred by the employee due to an injury or adverse reaction to a vaccine and to provide any necessary paid time off to the employee, in addition to any sick time, vacation time or other benefit offered by the employer. Compensation

for the employee's injury or adverse reaction to a vaccine is provided in addition to any remedy available under the workers' compensation laws.

ENVIRONMENTAL

LD 1040, An Act To Waive the Variance Process for Harvesting Timber in a Shoreland Zone. (Rep. Arata, R-New Gloucester) *Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.* This bill allows a landowner to conduct timber harvesting activities on property adjacent to a river, stream, pond, wetland or tidal water that exceed limits established by Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Forestry rules if determined necessary by a professional forester in order to meet acceptable forestry standards upon a 5-day notice to the bureau by the landowner stating the area where the timber harvesting activity is to take place, the name of the professional forester, the professional forester's license number and the professional forester's determination of the need for the timber harvesting activity.

HEALTH CARE

LD 1085, An Act To Ensure That Maine Residents Have Adequate and Affordable Access to Health Care. (Sen. Sanborn, D-Cumberland) *Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services.* A concept draft, this bill proposes to ensure that consumer protections in health insurance are maintained under state law.

INSURANCE

LD 942, An Act To Require Reimbursement for Medical Marijuana. (Sen. Collings, D-Portland) *Joint*

Legislative Week Ahead

Check it out at
www.mainechamber.org/legweekahead.php

A snapshot of the biggest legislative issues of the week, the Legislative Week Ahead, provides a weekly video forecast of the biggest issues facing lawmakers in Augusta during the upcoming week. The Maine State Chamber's Advocacy team breaks down the issues and what each means to your business. New episodes are posted each Tuesday during the legislative session.

View the Legislative Week Ahead by visiting www.mainechamber.org/legweekahead.php, or see past Legislative Week Ahead videos by visiting www.mainechamber.org/legweekaheadarchive.php. □

Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. Part A of this bill requires a health insurance carrier to provide coverage for marijuana for medical use for a health plan enrollee who has received certification for the medical use of marijuana from an authorized medical provider. Carriers are required to directly reimburse a health plan enrollee for the costs of obtaining a medical marijuana certificate and the costs of medical marijuana. The requirements apply to all individual and group policies and contracts issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2020. Part A also applies the same requirements to individual and group accidental injury and disability insurance. Part B of the bill requires an employer to reimburse an employee eligible for workers' compensation benefits for the costs of obtaining a medical marijuana certificate and the costs of medical marijuana.

LD 1009, An Act To Provide Protections for Maine Patients Facing Step Therapy. (Rep. Warren, D-Hallowell) *Joint*
Continued on Page 18...

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Public Hearings... *(Continued from Page 14...)*

Environment and Natural Resources
10:00 a.m.; Cross Building, Room 216
LD 640, Resolve, To Require a Study of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions from the Proposed Central Maine Power Company Transmission Corridor (Sen. Carson of Cumberland)

Monday, March 18, 2019

Labor and Housing
9:00 a.m.; Cross Building, Room 202
LD 425, An Act To Strengthen Small Businesses in Rural Maine by Changing the Minimum Wage (Rep. White of Washburn)
LD 612, An Act To Promote Youth Employment (Rep. Bradstreet of Vassalboro)
LD 670, An Act To Increase the Minimum Wage for Large Employers (Rep. Collings of Portland)
LD 739, An Act To Help Small Businesses by Establishing an Alternate Minimum Wage (Rep. Rudnicki of Fairfield)
LD 808, An Act To Create a Youth Wage

(Sen. Timberlake of Androscoggin)
LD 830, An Act To Balance Maine's Minimum Wage for Small and Large Employers (Rep. Stetkis of Canaan)
LD 1098, An Act To Help Small Employers by Making the Minimum Wage Increase More Gradual in Nonurban Areas (Sen. Keim of Oxford)

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

Energy Utilities and Technology
1:30 p.m.; Cross Building, Room 211
LD 1027, An Act To Eliminate the 100-megawatt Limit on Hydroelectric Generators under the Renewable Resources Laws (Rep. Hanley of Pittston)
LD 1048, An Act To Encourage Conservation in Determining Natural Gas Rates (Sen. Sanborn of Cumberland)
LD 1060, An Act To Authorize Consumers Located Adjacent to Electric Power Generators To Obtain Power Directly (Rep. Campbell of Orrington)

Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business
1:00 p.m.; Cross Building, Room 202
LD 909, Resolve, Directing the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development To Establish a Blockchain Technology Working Group (Rep. Wadsworth of Hiram)

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

Environment and Natural Resources
1:00 p.m.; Cross Building, Room 216
LD 274, An Act To Allow the Sale of Ethanol-free Gasoline Statewide (Sen. Miramant of Knox)
LD 822, An Act To Prohibit the Sale of Motor Fuel Containing More than 10% Ethanol (Rep. O'Connor of Berwick)
LD 1080, Resolve, Regarding Biofuel in Number 2 Heating Oil (Rep. Riley of Jay)

Thursday, March 21, 2019

Education and Cultural Affairs
1:00 p.m.; Cross Building, Room 208
LD 979, An Act To Provide Consistent Data Regarding Education Funding (Rep. Stearns of Guilford) □

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MAINE STATE CHAMBER of COMMERCE Washington, D.C. FLY-IN 2019



Please mark your calendar and plan to join us for the Maine State Chamber of Commerce's seventh annual

◆ Washington, D.C. Fly-In ◆
Tuesday, April 9 to Thursday, April 11, 2019

in collaboration with the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

We are excited about this year's Washington D.C. Fly-In Program, and we know you will be too. In order to touch on a number of federal issues that impact our member businesses, we are again working with the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to provide a **Federal Issue Briefing** session.

As a cornerstone piece of our program, we are scheduling appointments with our Maine Congressional Delegation, as well as their key staffers — allowing you the ability to share your business concerns, discuss challenges and solutions. We continue to find ourselves in the middle of important issues in Washington that have a significant impact on our members, ie healthcare, energy, taxes, regulations, etc. We take pride in putting together this unique opportunity available for Maine State Chamber of Commerce members. We hope you are able to join us for this unique opportunity.

Space is limited...

Event registration is \$750 per attendee. **Please register by Thursday, March 15, 2019.** Attendees are responsible for all travel arrangements. There is an overnight room block available at the George Hotel for a special room rate, and **reservations must be made directly to the George Hotel by Monday, March 12,** by calling (800) 546-7866. Please indicate that you are a member of the Maine State Chamber's group.

Register today!

Don't miss this event that delivers unique federal access and advocacy. For more information or to confirm your attendance, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing msanborn@mainechamber.org. □

in conjunction with

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
Manufacturers



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

"The 2018 Fly-In was another great event! We are lucky in a state like Maine to have access to elected leaders in Washington, but the Fly-In also gave us time with important members of the DC staff, which is invaluable. Those are important relationships that can be established on these visits."

Michael P. Bourque, APR, WCP,
Senior Vice President, External Affairs,
The MEMIC Group

"We are so fortunate to have four legislators in D.C. who make themselves available to talk, discuss the issues, and probe for the best outcome available. It gives me great satisfaction knowing that the Maine Chamber paves the way for this event, which is very efficient with our time."

David Barber, Senior Advisor,
AdvancePierre / Barber Foods

New Legislation...

(Continued from Page 15...)

Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. This bill requires health insurance carriers to establish a process for prescription drug step therapy exceptions.

LABOR

LD 1051, An Act To Create the Maine Family First Employer Program. (Sen. Herbig, D-Waldo) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing.* This bill creates the Maine Family First Employer Program under the Department of Labor to award employers that create family-friendly workplaces by providing, for all full-time employees, advancement and leadership opportunities; the same pay rates for similar work; stipends or assistance for child care; paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child and medical care for employees or family members of employees; flexible work accommodations for other family obligations; and health insurance and retirement plan options. The awards are presented by the Governor and come with a logo that a designated employer may use for promotional purposes.

MINIMUM WAGE

LD 1098, An Act To Help Small Employers by Making the Minimum Wage Increase More Gradual in Nonurban Areas. (Sen. Keim, R-Oxford) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing.* This bill creates an alternative minimum hourly wage that applies to certain designated nonurban areas starting on January 1, 2020. Under this bill the minimum hourly wage rate for those areas is \$11 per hour and increases by 50¢ each January 1st until it reaches \$12 per hour on January 1, 2022. The minimum hourly wage stays the same as in current law for Cumberland County, except for the towns of Baldwin, Bridgton, Harrison and Naples. The bill also freezes any scheduled increase in the current minimum wage or the new alternative minimum wage if there is in effect an extended benefit period for

Continued on Page 20...

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Best EEO Practices for a Successful Business: Human resource update proves informative and educational

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On Wednesday, February 27, the Maine State Chamber, in collaboration with the Maine Human Rights Commission and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and sponsored by Littler and Community Health Options, offered a special event centered upon Best EEO Practices for a Successful Business: Human Resource Issues Update.

Small business owners and employers may have legal responsibilities under the federal employment anti-discrimination laws enforced by the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Maine Human Rights Commission (MHRC). This workshop was designed with the intent to educate small businesses and help owners and managers focus on running a successful business by maintaining a strong EEO policy. Whether dealing with a complaint filed with the EEOC/MHRC or a lawsuit filed by the EEOC/MHRC, the results can be a drain to a business' mental and financial resources. Studies show that complaints of employment discrimination have been known to lead to moral issues at the workplace and negatively impact creativity and productivity.

This workshop covered relevant topics, including the history of EEOC and MHRC and agency updates; breaking the silence on sexual harassment; leveling the playing field and reasonable job accommodations for employees with a disability or religion; equal pay for equal work; hiring "young" and "recent college graduates;" genetic information and the application process; best practices on how to work with the EEOC; and, retaliation as a bad business practice. □

New Legislation...

(Continued from Page 18...)

unemployment compensation benefits, as determined by the Commissioner of Labor. The scheduled increase or increases will resume once there is no longer an extended benefit period in effect as of January 1st of a given year. It also delays the cost-of-living adjustment for the current minimum wage to January 1, 2024, changes the calculation to be the average cost-of-living increase over the prior 3 years and changes the timing of the cost-of-living adjustment to be every 3 years instead of every year. It also requires the Department of Labor to submit an annual report analyzing job creation and job loss trends in urban and nonurban areas since the initiation of minimum wage increases established by Initiated Bill 2015, chapter 2, section 1.

TAXATION

LD 963, An Act to Exempt Overtime Pay from the Individual Income Tax. (Rep. Grignon, R-Athens) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation.* The bill would exclude from income tax overtime compensation if the employer is required by law to pay the overtime compensation to the employee.

LD 989, An Act to Improve Maine's Tax Laws. (Sen. Chipman, D-Cumberland) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation.* The bill proposes to make changes to the tax laws to improve the application and efficacy of the tax laws.

LD 1028, An Act to Prevent and Reduce Tobacco Use with Adequate Funding and by Raising the Tax on Tobacco Products. (Rep. McCreight, D-Harpswell) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation.* The bill would increase the cigarette tax from \$2.00 per pack to \$3.50 per pack of 20 cigarettes and increases the tax on all other tobacco products including electronic cigarettes to 81% of the wholesale price beginning November 1, 2019. Revenues derived from the sale of those products would be directed towards tobacco prevention and cessation activities.

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MAINE S T A T E CHAMBER *of* COMMERCE

Regional Business Breakfasts

After the legislature adjourns, our staff routinely travels throughout the state during the spring and summer months to discuss legislative activity and the critical role individual business owners can play in the passage or defeat of legislation. The Maine State Chamber gathers business leaders on a regional level through its **Regional Business Breakfast Meetings**. Local business leaders provide valuable insight that is instrumental to this open dialogue about business issues that affect your business, your community, and your state.

To register for any of these **FREE** events, please contact Kelsey Morrell by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 104, or by emailing kmorrell@mainechamber.org. To sponsor one of these events in your area, please contact Melody Rousseau by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 102, or by emailing melodyr@mainechamber.org.

Each Regional Business Breakfast runs from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

Tuesday, June 4

Southern Maine Regional Breakfast Meeting

Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, 2 Gannett Drive, South Portland

Wednesday, June 19

Kennebec Valley Regional Breakfast Meeting

Bangor Savings Bank, Senator Way, Augusta

Wednesday, June 26

Maine Highlands Regional Breakfast Meeting

Location TBD – Bangor Area

In collaboration with Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce

Thursday, June 27

Northern Maine Regional Breakfast Meeting

University of Maine at Presque Isle, St. John & Aroostook Rooms

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New Legislation...

(Continued from Page 20...)

LD 1070, An Act to Reduce the Number of Domestic Assaults and Suicides by Increasing the Tax on Alcohol. (Rep. Cardone, D-Bangor) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation.* The bill for the purpose of reducing the incidence of domestic violence would increase the tax on malt liquor, wines, spirits and hard cider from 7% to 10%.

LD 1074, An Act to Establish a Tax on Water Extracted from Bottling in Order to Secure the Economic Future of Rural Maine. (Rep. Gramlich, D-Old Orchard) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation.* The bill would create an excise tax of 12 cents per gallon on the extraction of groundwater or surface water for commercial bottling for sale. Revenue from the tax would be used to improve the economy of the State by supporting the expansion and improvement of high speed broadband access.

LD 1110, An Act to Establish a Local Option Sales Tax. (Rep. Gramlich, D-Old Orchard Beach) *Joint Standing Committee on Taxation.* The bill would allow a municipality to impose a local option sales tax if approved by referendum of the voters of that municipality.

TRANSPORTATION

LD 938, An Act To Provide for Sustainable Transportation in Maine. (Rep. McClean, D-Gorham) *Joint Standing Committee on Transportation.* This bill proposes to provide a means of sustainable transportation funding for the State.

LD 1034, An Act To Provide Revenue To Fix and Rebuild Maine's Transportation Infrastructure. (Rep. McClean, D-Gorham) *Joint Standing Committee on Transportation.* This bill does the following for the purpose of increasing revenue to the Highway Fund and for other transportation purposes, such as:

- 1 It increases certain fees charged by the Secretary of State for driver's license examinations, temporary license

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WORKPLACE WELLNESS

HEALTHY EMPLOYEES MAKE CENTS!

Sleep Tips: Six Steps to Better Sleep

Think about all the factors that can interfere with a good night's sleep — from work stress and family responsibilities to unexpected challenges, such as illnesses. It's no wonder that quality sleep is sometimes elusive. While you might not be able to control the factors that interfere with your sleep, you can adopt habits that encourage better sleep. Start with these simple tips.

You're not doomed to toss and turn every night. Consider simple tips for better sleep, from setting a sleep schedule to including physical activity in your daily routine. The staff at the Mayo Clinic compiled these suggestions. You can find this and more online at <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/sleep/art-20048379>.

- 1 Stick to a sleep schedule:** Set aside no more than eight hours for sleep. The recommended amount of sleep for a healthy adult is at least seven hours. Most people don't need more than eight hours in bed to achieve this goal. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day. Try to limit the difference in your sleep schedule on weeknights and weekends to no more than one hour. Being consistent reinforces your body's sleep-wake cycle. If you don't fall asleep within about 20 minutes, leave your bedroom and do something relaxing. Read or listen to soothing music. Go back to bed when you're tired. Repeat as needed.
- 2 Pay attention to what you eat and drink:** Don't go to bed hungry or stuffed. In particular, avoid heavy or large meals within a couple of hours of bedtime. Your discomfort might keep you up. Nicotine, caffeine and alcohol deserve caution, too. The stimulating effects of nicotine and caffeine take hours to wear off and can wreak havoc on quality sleep. And even though alcohol might make you feel sleepy, it can disrupt sleep later in the night.
- 3 Create a restful environment:** Create a room that's ideal for sleeping. Often, this means cool, dark and quiet. Exposure to light might make it more challenging to fall asleep. Avoid prolonged use of light-emitting screens just before bedtime. Consider using room-darkening shades, earplugs, a fan or other devices to create an environment that suits your needs. Doing calming activities before bedtime, such as taking a bath or using relaxation techniques, might promote better sleep.
- 4 Limit daytime naps:** Long daytime naps can interfere with nighttime sleep. If you choose to nap, limit yourself to up to 30 minutes and avoid doing so late in the day. If you work nights, however, you might need to nap late in the day before work to help make up your sleep debt.
- 5 Include physical activity in your daily routine:** Regular physical activity can promote better sleep. Avoid being active too close to bedtime, however. Spending time outside every day might be helpful, too.
- 6 Manage worries:** Try to resolve your worries or concerns before bedtime. Jot down what's on your mind and then set it aside for tomorrow. Stress management might help. Start with the basics, such as getting organized, setting priorities and delegating tasks. Meditation also can ease anxiety.

Lastly, know when to contact your doctor. Nearly everyone has an occasional sleepless night — but if you often have trouble sleeping, contact your doctor. Identifying and treating any underlying causes can help you get the better sleep you deserve.

When employees feel good, they tend to perform better. That's why most Chamber BlueOptions' plans come with employee discounts on health products and services, as well as an online come with employee discounts on health products and services, as well as an online health and fitness program. Just contact your Anthem-appointed insurance producer for more information, or visit the Chamber's BlueOptions web page (www.mainechamber.org/blueoptions.php) to find a producer. For more information on the Chamber BlueOptions health plan, please contact Peter Gore by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 107, or by emailing pgore@mainechamber.org. □

New Legislation... **(Continued from Page 21...)**

plates, nondriver identification cards, duplicate registrations, titles, driver's licenses, nondriver identification cards and transfers of registrations.

- 2 It increases the sales tax on the short-term rental of automobiles and certain pickup trucks and vans from 10% to 12%.
- 3 It requires 5% of the sales tax imposed on transportation-related items, such as motor vehicles and products for the repair and maintenance of motor vehicles, such as motor oil, batteries and tires, to be transferred to the Highway Fund on a monthly basis.
- 4 Beginning October 1, 2019, it increases the tax imposed on gasoline to 36.5¢ per gallon and the tax imposed on special fuel to 37.7¢ per gallon.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

LD 1013, *An Act To Clarify the Disqualification from Unemployment Benefits of a Person Who Is Terminated from Employment for Being Under the Influence of Marijuana.* (Sen. Cyrway, R-Kennebec) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing.* This bill clarifies that an individual whose employment is terminated because of the individual's being under the influence of marijuana while on duty or when reporting to work is disqualified from unemployment benefits, as is currently the case for alcohol and illegal drugs.

UTILITIES AND ENERGY

LD 950, *An Act To Develop a State Energy Plan To Provide a Pathway to an Energy Portfolio Free of Fossil Fuels.* (Rep. Devin, D-Newcastle) *Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology.* This bill proposes to develop a State energy plan to provide a pathway to an energy portfolio free of fossil fuels.

LD 955, *An Act To Prohibit Offshore Oil and Natural Gas Drilling and Exploration.* (Rep. Devin, D-Newcastle) *Joint Standing Committee on Environment*

and Natural Resources. This bill prohibits a person from performing or causing to be performed any oil or natural gas exploration, development or production in, on or under the waters of the State or that may adversely affect the waters of the State. The bill also prohibits the Department of Environmental Protection and the Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry from permitting, approving or otherwise authorizing any oil or natural gas exploration, development or production in, on or under the submerged and intertidal land owned by the State. It is the intent of this legislation to generally prohibit activities relating to offshore oil and natural gas exploration, development and production within the boundaries and jurisdiction of the State, which place the State's coastal communities at economic and ecological risk from oil spills, and from the pollution caused by routine drilling operations and onshore industrialization, and threaten the quality of life and livelihoods of Maine citizens and economically significant industries, including tourism, recreation and commercial and recreational fishing, and small businesses that rely on a clean and healthy ocean and clean and healthy beaches.

LD 1003, *An Act To Ensure Accurate Explanations of Electric Bills.* (Rep. Berry, D-Bowdoinham) *Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology.* This bill requires an investor-owned transmission and distribution utility to obtain the approval of the Public Utilities Commission before providing information explaining electricity rate components to a customer. The bill requires the commission to ensure that the information provided to a customer accurately reflects the overall rate structure and cost components for the supply and delivery of electricity. The bill also requires the commission to receive input from the Public Advocate and other interested parties before approving or disapproving any written information provided by an investor-owned transmission and distribution utility to a customer.

LD 1027, *An Act To Eliminate the 100-megawatt Limit on Hydroelectric Generators under the Renewable*

Resources Laws. (Rep. Hanley, R-Pittston) *Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology.* This bill removes the 100-megawatt capacity limit for a hydroelectric generator that meets all state and federal fish passage requirements applicable to generators to qualify as a renewable capacity resource and for a hydroelectric generator to qualify as a renewable resource for the purpose of meeting the State's renewable resource portfolio requirement.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

LD 947, *An Act To Extend the Notice of Injury Period in the Maine Workers' Compensation Act of 1992.* (Sen. Bellows, D-Kennebec) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing.* Under current law governing workers' compensation, an employee must provide notice of injury to an employer within 30 days after the date of injury. This bill provides that, for claims for which the date of injury is on or after January 1, 2020, an employee must provide to the employer notice of the injury within 180 days after the date of injury.

LD 1095, *An Act Regarding Workers' Compensation Liens.* (Sen. Bellows, D-Kennebec) *Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing.* When a worker suffers an injury or death that is eligible for workers' compensation benefits under the Maine Workers' Compensation Act of 1992 and that is sustained under circumstances that create legal liability for a 3rd person, the injured employee may either claim workers' compensation benefits or seek damages in a civil suit against that 3rd person to recover damages. Under current law, if the injured employee chooses to claim workers' compensation benefits from the employer, the employer has a lien on any damages subsequently recovered against that 3rd person in the civil action for the value of workers' compensation benefits paid. This bill limits the amount of the lien of the employer of the injured or deceased employee to only the value of damages received by or on behalf of the injured or deceased employee that are attributable to compensation for past or future medical treatment and loss of income or earning capacity. □

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