

The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony to Support LD 15

“An Act To Provide for Municipalities To Allow Grocery Stores up to 10,000 Square Feet To Open on Thanksgiving, Easter and Christmas”

Senator Herbig, Representative Larsen-Daughtry, and distinguished members of the Committee On Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Adam Crepeau and I serve as the policy analyst for The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 15, “An Act To Provide for Municipalities To Allow Grocery Stores up to 10,000 Square Feet To Open on Thanksgiving, Easter and Christmas.”

The Maine Heritage Policy Center firmly believes consumers and business owners should be the primary entities to decide whether or not specific stores are open during the holidays. This bill is a step in the right direction because it would allow grocery stores under 10,000 square feet of customer selling space to be open on Thanksgiving, Easter, and Christmas if their municipality allows it. State government does not know what is best for every business, large or small, in Maine. Consumers, business owners and employees are the groups who are directly affected by blue laws, therefore they should be who decides if stores are open or closed on holidays.

While this bill does not give complete control to consumers and business owners for the aforementioned stores, it does allow municipalities to do so. The current law does not allow grocery stores that have over 5,000 square feet of customer selling space to be open on Thanksgiving, Easter, and Christmas period. Since this bill is going in the right direction and is more favorable to the free market than current law, The Maine Heritage Policy Center is inclined to support it.

Blue laws affect consumers, business owners, and employees in different ways. Consumers are affected because they are not able to conduct last minute food shopping around the holidays at larger grocery stores. Employees who work at these grocery stores are not afforded the opportunity to earn extra wages during the holidays and business owners who own large grocery stores cannot bring in extra revenue.

As of 2017, Maine was one of only three states that still impose these restrictions.¹ Blue laws are not only uncommon in the United States but are also outdated. In the 21st century, vestiges of our strict religious heritage, however valid when guiding personal behavior, should not dictate public policymaking.

The Maine Heritage Policy Center is encouraged to see this legislation has bipartisan support. This bill would be good for employers, employees and consumers in the state of Maine. To that end, we urge the committee to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 15. Thank you.

¹<https://www.foxbangor.com/news/item/22682-explaining-maine-s-blue-laws-and-why-we-have-to-wait-to-shop-until-friday>