

Maine Women's Lobby 2018 Legislative Session Update

Dear Friends of Maine Women's Lobby:

The longest legislative session in Maine's history adjourned officially on September 13th, 2018, at 6:43 p.m. The following report relays the key outcomes, as reported by our 2018 Policy Advocate, Evelyn deFrees with additional information from Director of Policy and Program, Whitney Parrish, who joined the Maine Women's Lobby in August.

How did Maine's women fare? Results are mixed. Most bad bills were defeated; several good bills passed. Sexual harassment training is now required of all lawmakers and their staff as well as lobbyists, and trainings have begun to be scheduled. Child care subsidies will increase and background checks of providers will now be implemented across the state. Sadly, a study of a paid family leave insurance program was defeated by the Governor's veto which was not overridden in the House.

The Maine Women's Lobby (Lobby) staff testified, reached out to supporters, worked with partners, wrote opinion columns and spoke in public on many bills. The Lobby is grateful to the many partner organizations with whom we worked this session, all of which played invaluable and diverse leadership and supportive roles on vital policy issues.

And YOU, our members and supporters, rallied around many issues (both for and against). You spoke out loudly and often to your legislators through email and phone and came to hearings and meetings. Never doubt that your voices make a difference!

Note: Follow the links below to find relevant roll-calls to see how your legislator voted. Whenever possible we link to the last roll call the House or Senate took (usually on enactment or a veto override vote).

PASSED/GOOD NEWS

- **Child Care Subsidy Rate Increase/LD 166**—This bill (sponsored by Senator Nate Libby)—supported by funding from a federal child care block grant--will at last increase the child care subsidy rate of reimbursement from the 50th to the 75th percentile which should encourage more providers to accept payment from low-income families through the child care subsidy, and TANF and ASPIRE programs. The bill progressed through multiple votes in the House and the Senate, the Governor vetoed and then both bodies overrode the vetoes (33-3 in the Senate; 119-29 in the House). The bill will become law.
- **Support for Infant and Toddler Child Care/LD 383**—This resolve (sponsored by Senator Rebecca Millett) directs the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to examine methods to increase access for infant and toddler care in Maine, such as the utilization of contracts or tiered reimbursement. It was supported unanimously by the Health and Human Services Committee and went on to be passed by the House and Senate. The Governor vetoed the bill and then the House and Senate overrode the veto so it will become law.
- **ACA Preventative Measures/LD 1476**—The bill (sponsored by Representative Joyce McCreight) incorporates current federal ACA requirements for coverage of preventive health services, including services for women, into Maine state law. The requirements apply to all individual and group health insurance policies and contracts issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2019. The Health and Human Services Committee (HHS) unanimously supported the bill and the House and Senate later agreed. The Governor vetoed the bill but was overridden in House and Senate, and this bill will become law.

- **Child Care Provider Background Checks/LD 274**—The bill (sponsored by Representative Joyce McCreight) to require background checks for child care providers was unanimously supported by the HHS Committee. After much back and forth, the bill passed when both bodies voted to override a veto. The Senate vote was unanimous; the House vote was divided.
- **Prevent Sexual Harassment at the State House/LD 1842**—The bill (sponsored by Senator Paul Davis) requires stricter anti-sexual harassment training for lawmakers, their staffs and lobbyists. The Lobby supported this bill, having advocated for Maine’s original sexual harassment prevention statute (adopted in 1991) which directed all Maine workplaces with 15 or more employees to provide this training to all employees within one year of hire. The bill was finally passed in June.

DEFEATED/GOOD NEWS

- **Anti-Fingerprinting Bill/LD 561**—This bill (sponsored by Representative Heather Sirocki) would have removed the fingerprint requirement from state law and threatened the safety of children. The HHS Committee voted unanimously ought not to pass, the House and Senate agreed so the bill was defeated.
- **Child Care Provider Ratios/LD 765**—This bill (sponsored by Representative Ellie Espling) would have increased the number of children (to five) who could be cared for in an *unlicensed* home day care. The HHS Committee voted unanimously to defeat; House and Senate agreed (placed in “legislative files”).
- **Reduce Regulation of Child Care Facilities/LD 1474**—This bill (sponsored by Representative Ellie Espling) contained many provisions to reduce regulation of child care licensing. The HHS Committee voted unanimously to defeat and the House and Senate agreed (placed in “legislative files”).
- **Weaken Minimum Wage/LD 1757**—This bill (sponsored by Representative Joel Stetkis) was an assault on the minimum wage increases (from \$10 to \$11 per hour in January 2019) approved at the ballot box in 2016. A divided Labor, Commerce and Economic Development (LCRED) Committee voted narrowly against the bill. The House (preferring defeat) and Senate (preferring passage of an amended version) disagreed on the outcome and the bill was defeated by this procedural disagreement (non-concurrence).
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)/LD 1904**—Very similar to a bill defeated in 2017, this bill (a committee bill sponsored by Senator Kim Rosen) grew out of several separate bills proposed to criminalize FGM. It was introduced with support of anti-Muslim groups working nationwide to demonize the Muslim and African immigrant community who come from places where FGM is practiced. FGM is already illegal federally, is not happening in Maine, and the state’s Attorney General has declared that Maine law is already sufficient to prosecute if warranted. The Lobby worked with partners in the immigrant, refugee, and asylee community to declare the bills were not needed, that funding for outreach and education to immigrant families was the real need, and any move toward criminalization threatens access to health care for immigrant women and girls. The Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee was divided about how to approach the issue. In the

end, the House and Senate disagreed about the desired outcome so the bill was defeated procedurally by this lack of agreement (non-concurrence).

DEFEATED/BAD NEWS

- **Paid Family Leave/1587**—This bill (sponsored by Representative Erin Herbig and Senator Amy Volk) proposed a paid family and medical leave program for Maine and had a strong hearing with many passionate speakers from diverse perspectives. Subsequently, legislative sponsors formed a stakeholder group to work on an amendment to the bill. A majority of LCRED Committee members voted to pass the amended bill which called for a modest unfunded actuarial study to be implemented by University of Maine. After several votes, the study bill was enacted by both the House and Senate. The Governor vetoed and a vote to override the veto failed in the House which defeated the bill.
- **Prevent Conversion Therapy/LD 912**—This bill (sponsored by Representative Ryan Fecteau) stipulates that medical and mental health providers licensed by the State of Maine will be prohibited from engaging in “conversion therapy,” practices or treatments that seek to change an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity. Minors subjected to conversion therapy are often forced to participate and are at the gravest risk of harm. After many work sessions, members of the LCRED Committee divided their votes over three different amended versions of the bill with two members voting to defeat the bill outright. The bill initially passed both bodies. However, after enactment in the Senate, it was vetoed by Governor Lepage and the bill died when the House failed to override. This was a deep disappointment, but we will return with our allies until this discredited and dangerous practice has been banned.
- **Medicaid Expansion Implementation:** Passed by Maine voters at the ballot box in 2017 and a top priority for a vast coalition of groups, Medicaid expansion would bring health care coverage to over 70,000 Maine women and men currently locked out of the system. With our partners, the Lobby supported the need for immediate implementation of this law in several hearings. Before the Legislature adjourned, a bipartisan majority of the Appropriations Committee supported funding in the Supplemental Budget (LD 837) for staff positions and technical assistance at the DHHS for implementation of this law. LD 837 was enacted in the Senate on June 20th, but died when the House sustained the Governor’s veto. Following a court challenge, the LePage administration continues to stubbornly resist implementing the law. The Lobby will continue to support expanded access to health care.