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STATE OF MAINE

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To: Dawn Hill, Senate Chair
Margaret Rotundo, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

From: John Patrick, Senate Chair *JLP*
Erin Herbig, House Chair *EH*
Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic
Development

Date: May 31, 2013

Subject: LD 1509 Part BBB (Fee for Vending Facilities Operated by Blind Persons)

We are writing to provide the recommendation of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development on the proposed amendment to Language Part BBB of the Biennial Budget Bill. We appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on this issue, and respectfully submit our recommendation and comments for your consideration.

On May 29th the committee reviewed and discussed this amendment, with input from the owner of the Cross Café who is a participant in the Department of Labor's Business Enterprise Program, as well as the Commissioner of Labor and a representative from the Department of Administrative and Financial Services. After careful consideration, the committee voted 7 to 2 to recommend the amendment to Part BBB be moved Out, and not be included in the budget.

Although the amended version of Part BBB retains some of the current protections in law for this important program by only allowing the charging of utility costs to blind and visually impaired cafeteria operators, the committee still has significant policy concerns with this provision. The current program is advantageous in helping the blind and visually impaired community by fostering opportunities for business ownership and the employment of this disadvantaged population. This arrangement is also beneficial for the State employees, Legislators and the general public who enjoy the services offered by these businesses. This is a worthwhile program, and the potential cost savings to the State presented by this amendment are very minor.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendation and comments.