

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# 126th MAINE LEGISLATURE

## SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2014

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Legislative Document

No. 1710

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S.P. 676

In Senate, January 8, 2014

### An Act To Retain Call Centers in Maine

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Approved for introduction by a majority of the Legislative Council pursuant to Joint Rule 203.

Reference to the Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Grant'.

DAREK M. GRANT  
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator JACKSON of Aroostook.  
Cosponsored by Representative HERBIG of Belfast and  
Senators: President ALFOND of Cumberland, HASKELL of Cumberland, PATRICK of  
Oxford, Representatives: Speaker EVES of North Berwick, McCABE of Skowhegan,  
PLANTE of Berwick.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 26 MRSA c. 43** is enacted to read:

3 **CHAPTER 43**

4 **CALL CENTER RETENTION**

5 **§3501. Definitions**

6 As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms  
7 have the following meanings.

8 **1. Agency.** "Agency" means an executive branch agency of the State.

9 **2. Call center.** "Call center" means a business enterprise that employs, for the  
10 purpose of customer service or back office operations:

11 A. Fifty or more employees, excluding part-time employees; or

12 B. Fifty or more employees who in the aggregate work at least 1,500 hours per week,  
13 excluding overtime hours.

14 **3. Commissioner.** "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Labor.

15 **4. Employer.** "Employer" means a person, partnership, firm, association or  
16 corporation, public or private, that operates a call center.

17 **5. Part-time employee.** "Part-time employee" means an employee who works an  
18 average of less than 20 hours per week or who has been employed for less than 6 months  
19 during the 12 months preceding the date on which notice is required pursuant to section  
20 3502, subsection 1.

21 **§3502. Notice requirement; list of employers**

22 **1. Notice requirement.** An employer that intends to relocate a call center, or one or  
23 more facilities or operating units within a call center handling at least 30% of the call  
24 center's total call volume for the previous 12 months, from the State to a foreign country  
25 shall notify the commissioner at least 120 days before the relocation.

26 **2. List.** The commissioner shall compile a semiannual list of all employers that  
27 relocate a call center or one or more facilities or operating units within a call center as  
28 described in subsection 1. The commissioner shall distribute the list to all agencies under  
29 the jurisdiction of the commissioner.

30 **3. Penalty.** An employer who fails to notify the commissioner of the relocation of a  
31 call center at least 120 days before the relocation may be assessed a fine of \$10,000 for  
32 each day the employer fails to notify the commissioner, except that the commissioner  
33 may reduce the amount for just cause shown.

1 **§3503. Grants; guaranteed loans; tax benefits**

2 **1. Ineligibility.** Except as provided in subsection 3, and notwithstanding any other  
3 provision of law, an employer that appears on the list described in section 3502,  
4 subsection 2 is ineligible for any direct or indirect state grant, state guaranteed loan or tax  
5 benefit for 5 years after the date the list is compiled.

6 **2. Remit remaining amount.** Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an  
7 employer that appears on the list described in section 3502, subsection 2 shall remit the  
8 unamortized value of any state grant, state guaranteed loan or tax benefit the employer  
9 previously received to the commissioner.

10 **3. Exceptions.** The commissioner, in consultation with the appropriate agency, may  
11 waive the eligibility restriction under subsection 1 if the employer applying for a loan or  
12 grant demonstrates that a lack of a state grant, state guaranteed loan or tax benefit would  
13 result in substantial job loss in the State or harm the environment.

14 **§3504. In-state procurement**

15 An agency head shall ensure that all call center work contracted for by the agency is  
16 performed by contractors or their agents or subcontractors located entirely within the  
17 State.

18 **§3505. State benefits for workers**

19 This chapter may not be construed to permit withholding or denial of payments,  
20 compensation or benefits under any other state law, including state unemployment  
21 compensation, disability payments or worker retraining or readjustment funds, from or to  
22 employees employed by employers that relocate to a foreign country.

23 **Sec. 2. Contract with State.** An employer who on the effective date of this Act  
24 is under contract with the State to perform call center work and performs that work  
25 outside the State has 2 years to comply with the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 26, chapter  
26 43, except that if the employer adds employees to perform call center work under the  
27 contract, the new employees must immediately be employed within the State.

28 **Sec. 3. Effective date.** This Act takes effect 180 days after adjournment of the  
29 Second Regular Session of the 126th Legislature.

30 **SUMMARY**

31 This bill requires the Commissioner of Labor to create a list of employers that have  
32 relocated a call center, or a facility or operating unit handling at least 30% of call volume  
33 within a call center, from the State to a foreign country. An employer appearing on the  
34 list is ineligible for a state grant, loan or tax benefit for 5 years. The bill also requires the  
35 employer to pay back the unamortized value of a state grant, loan or tax benefit  
36 previously issued to such an employer. The bill requires that call center work for  
37 executive branch agencies of the State be performed in the State. If the employer fails to

1 notify the Commissioner of Labor of the relocation of a call center at least 120 days  
2 before the relocation, a daily fine of \$10,000 may be assessed.