



The ENACT Labor Network

A program of ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation

2019-2020 Academic Year Report



The ENACT Labor Network pilot initiative was supported by the Louis D. Brandeis Legacy Fund for Social Justice, which is funded in part by Ethics Center Board member Jules Bernstein '57 and his wife, Linda Lipsett.

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Editorial Assistant: Norman Abbott, MPA/MPP '20



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Introduction



In the fall of 2019, I embarked on an experiment with four dedicated ENACT Faculty Fellows, a handful of undergraduate students from across the country, and the logistical, financial and intellectual support of the International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life and the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University. Together, we piloted the ENACT Labor Network (ELN).

The ELN is a pilot project of ENACT, The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation. ENACT teaches university students about our democracy through engagement in the state legislative process. Students are encouraged to think deeply about the complexities of shaping laws for constituents who hold diverse viewpoints about what is right and good for society and how best to progress through the legislative process.

This upcoming academic year, ENACT will expand its network to include universities in all 50 states, creating a strategic information hub linking students, faculty, activists and legislators.

The ELN is a deep dive into labor issues, guided by four ENACT Faculty Fellows who graciously agreed to accompany me on this adventure as ELN Faculty Fellows: Jay Barth and Peter Gess of Hendrix College, Robert Glover of the University of Maine and Katharine Owens of the University of Hartford.

Working with a small team of students, my colleagues and I mentored students on current state labor issues, meeting with advocates, experts and state legislators.

I must thank several people and organizations whose support has been invaluable:

This pilot project is supported by a generous donation by the Louis D. Brandeis Legacy Fund for Social Justice, which is funded in part by Ethics Center Board member Jules Bernstein '57 and his wife, Linda Lipsett; and by a grant from Bringing Theory to Practice. This project would not exist without the support of the Heller School of Social Policy and Management, specifically Dean David Weil, Professor and Heller Faculty Leader of the ELN Jessica Santos, and ELN Graduate Student Assistant Norman Abbott. As always, David Weinstein, Assistant Director of ENACT, helped to organize and support all of the players.

Melissa Stimell

ENACT Academic Program Director

Professor of the Practice, Legal Studies

Chair, Social Justice and Social Policy

Director of Internships, Legal Studies Program

Interim Director, International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life



Reflections on the ENACT Labor Network



The 2019-20 academic year is coming to a close at Brandeis University, and our Zoom rooms are full of students and faculty celebrating their achievements. In these COVID-driven virtual spaces, we are showing up while adapting to a rapidly changing world full of confusion/clarity, grief/hope, and fear/courage.

Knowledge about policy, social justice, and wellbeing that just a few months ago was theoretical and distant for some students has come sharply into focus and will shape our collective future.

At the center of these conversations are questions about labor:

- **Roles and rights:** How does the U.S. define “essential” work? What rights to workers have to keep themselves and their families safe while also keeping them fed?
- **Stakeholders:** What is the government’s role in stabilizing labor markets and the financial conditions of families as the economy changes shape? What is the role of the private sector? Labor unions? How can we all work together to reduce inequality and ensure a healthy economy?
- **Place-based considerations:** What are the most pressing labor needs in rural areas? In densely populated and diversifying cities? How can we leverage local resources and create strong and vibrant communities through effective legislation?

The ENACT Labor Network (ELN) Student Fellows, nine motivated, principled and thoughtful undergraduates in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine and Arkansas, are on my list to help us find answers.

Over the past year, these undergraduate fellows worked closely with faculty and community stakeholders to conduct research on and advance labor legislation in their state. As you will see in this report, they conducted hands-on legislative research and advocacy, visiting state houses and talking directly to policymakers. They learned from nationally recognized labor scholars and experts. And perhaps most importantly, we experimented together to create a new virtual structure for cross-state learning within the thriving national ENACT program.

As a result, ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation, based at Brandeis University’s International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life, now has a new model of virtual learning and engagement that can be replicated and adapted into the future.

As the ELN Heller School Faculty Leader, I was inspired by our student fellows’ deep commitment to social change, which they demonstrated through incisive questions and an openness to learning at our monthly Zoom meetings and expert sessions.

After just two semesters, I now think of them a cohort of emerging leaders and look forward to hearing about the changes they enact in their communities. I suspect that much of their

— continued —

learning can be attributed to having incredible role models in the four ELN Faculty fellows who guided and mentored them throughout. The ELN Faculty Fellows' creativity and dedication to student growth represents the best of higher education.

For some, the COVID-19 pandemic has radically shifted priorities. For me, it primarily reinforces the need for programs like ENACT and the ENACT Labor Network that combine high quality education, civic engagement, leadership development, and social justice.

Knowing that these ENACT Labor Network Student Fellows are our future policymakers, advocates, researchers, and labor leaders tips the scale for me, and leaves me wrapping up the academic year with clarity, hope, and courage.

Jessica Santos, PhD

ENACT Labor Network Heller School Faculty Leader
Director of Community-Engaged Research
Institute on Assets and Social Policy
Heller School for Social Policy and Management
Brandeis University



Engaging with Leaders and Becoming Leaders



Over the course of this academic year, ENACT Labor Network faculty and staff experimented with technology and pedagogy to establish and grow a cohesive network that linked faculty, students, and local and national experts together in innovative ways.

David Weil, Dean of Brandeis University's Heller School of Social Policy and Management, introduced us to two nationally recognized economists and policy experts representing different perspectives on labor, based at policy think tanks on different ends of the political spectrum.

ELN Student Fellows had video conference calls with Heidi Shierholz, Senior Economist and Director of Policy at the Economic Policy Institute, who has educated policymakers, journalists, and the public about the effects of economic policies on low- and middle-income families throughout her career; and Michael Strain, the John G. Searle Scholar and director of economic policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, who oversees the Institute's work in economic policy, financial markets, poverty studies, technology policy, energy economics, health care policy, and related areas.

In December, the ELN Student Fellows met via video call with Sam Hyun, a Heller School graduate student who has worked as a legislative aide to the Speaker of the Massachusetts State House. He shared his insider's perspective of state legislative advocacy, and discussed how legislators and advocates navigate competing priorities within the State House.

In the spring they spoke with Dean David Weil, an internationally recognized expert in employment and labor market policy and administrator of the Wage and Hour Division at the United States Department of Labor under President Obama; and with Ethics Center International Advisory Board Member Jules Bernstein '57, a Washington, D.C.-based labor lawyer who has advocated for workers' rights for more than a half-century.

It has been exciting to see ELN Student Fellows extend the ENACT one semester experience to a full year of research into their chosen issue and engagement in their state's legislative process.

The ELN Student Fellows explored each others' topics and state contexts as well, and developed deeper and broader understandings of labor issues nationally. They also served as resources to ENACT students in courses around the country as some of those students also focused on labor-related bills.

In ENACT we often share the words of Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis: "The most important office, and the one which all of us can and should fill, is that of private citizen." The ENACT Labor Network Student Fellows are models of what it can mean to fill that office.

David Weinstein
Assistant Director of ENACT



Dr. Jay Barth



Dr. Peter Gess

Arkansas – Hendrix College

Dr. Jay Barth and Dr. Peter Gess **ENACT Labor Network Faculty Fellows**

During the 2019-20 academic year at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas, two junior students—Olivia (Livi) Moore and Stephen Clark—were our ENACT Labor Network Student Fellows working on separate projects. Dr. Peter Gess worked closely with Livi across the year while Dr. Jay Barth worked with Stephen, a student who had also been a participant in his ENACT course — Arkansas Politics and Government — in the spring of 2019. Both students were registered for independent study credits in the fall 2019 semester providing them sufficient time to carry out their work. In the spring semester, the students refined their projects into publishable reports on the two labor-related topics that were at the heart of their research.

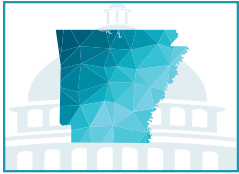
Livi, an interdisciplinary studies major with an emphasis on health economics, took on an important policy issue shared by many rural states: primary care physician shortages and the decline of rural health care access. As the state of Arkansas has struggled to alleviate this problem, various policy approaches have been led by the state’s premier medical school, the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

Starting with these approaches as a baseline, Livi crafted new approaches to attacking the problem, including increasing the number of viable residency programs in rural areas of the state and approval of additional responsibilities for nurse practitioners. Livi is hopeful she will be able to continue to promote her ideas in the coming year; she was just named a Newman Civic Fellow, and access to healthcare is the centerpiece of her fellowship and leadership development. Clearly this topic is a passion of Livi’s as she seeks graduate work in medicine and furthers a commitment to public health.

Stephen, a politics major with a deep interest in public policy at the state level, examined an issue that is more distinctive to Arkansas: wage theft. Arkansas is only one of a handful of states without a requirement that workers be provided a paycheck that details hours worked, pay, and overtime. While previous efforts have been made in legislative sessions to bring the state’s policy into the mainstream, these have been unsuccessful. Stephen analyzed previous legislative efforts on the issue of pay transparency, refined a version of the legislation that should be brought forward in 2021, and developed a survey to be carried out by advocates to ascertain the amount of wage theft actually occurring in the state to help justify the need for the legislation.

As ENACT Labor Network Student Fellows, both students had the time and space to engage in high-level, analytical research and were able to explore the economics and politics of these policy challenges. The policy analysis skills they developed will follow them into their senior years at Hendrix and beyond as they continue to develop their vocations and the Arkansas General Assembly returns to regular session.

Personally, we both really enjoyed working with Livi and Stephen and witnessing their tremendous growth over the year. For Jay, it was a wonderful way to extend his previous work in teaching an ENACT course; for Pete, a new ENACT Faculty Fellow, it helped jumpstart the development of his ENACT course on politics and policymaking in the Arkansas context.



Wage Theft

Stephen Clark
Hendrix College '21



During my ENACT Labor Network fellowship I focused on wage theft in Arkansas.

Arkansas is one of the poorest states in the country and a large portion of its working population is vulnerable to wage theft. It is the lack of laws protecting these workers that made me want to focus on wage theft. Arkansas is one of nine states to have no requirements regarding pay stubs. Pay stubs allow workers to know exactly what their hourly rate is and what deductions they are subject to. This helps prevent employers from failing to pay for overtime or trying to make illegal deductions to a worker's pay

I worked with a coalition of labor advocacy groups. They were a big help in putting me in contact with representatives throughout the legislature. Arkansas is a ruby red state, so at times it easy to feel dejected about creating changes to labor law. My meetings with advocacy groups not only helped me network, but they showed people were at the very least attempting to enact progressive labor legislation.

My experience has taught me how to properly craft a survey and materials to aid advocacy efforts, and I will be taking a bevy of useful contacts for future advocacy efforts.

“At times it easy to feel dejected about creating changes to labor law. However, my meetings with advocacy groups not only helped me network, but they showed people were at the very least attempting to enact progressive labor legislation.”



Olivia Moore
Hendrix College '21



"I was inspired by the chance to meet a successful female economist, and at the enthusiasm that she showed for my efforts to improve rural health access...At that moment, my dreams felt more accessible to me than ever before and I will carry that realization with me any time that I experience doubt."

Improving Rural Access to Healthcare

During my time with the ENACT Labor Network (ELN), I focused on Arkansas' Senate Bill 189, which was narrowly stuck down in February 2019. If passed, it would have expanded nurse practitioner's ability to practice independently. This issue, however, was important to me because increasing scope of practice for nurse practitioners would improve rural access to healthcare. Although a lack of access to healthcare is plaguing the United States as a whole, Arkansas is primarily rural, and feels this shortage more acutely.

The most difficult aspect of this project was identifying a single issue, because healthcare is a multifaceted field that is not only highly technical, but personal. Hospitals are at the center of rural communities, yet they are continuing to close without adequate funding.

Initially, I examined how one might increase funding, speaking with Dr. Tamara Jones, a former NIH researcher, and Dr. Mary Aitken, a pediatrician and former Director of Research for Arkansas Children's Hospital, to formulate a source of financial support to preserve rural hospitals. I quickly found that pouring money into the issue would not be enough, because the issue was not in funding, but in the willingness of primary care providers to live and work in rural communities.

After diligent research, I found that nurse practitioners would be willing to work in these areas and could provide comparable care, but needed the ability to practice to do so. The greatest surprise that came from my research was more closely examining the relationship between physicians and nurse practitioners and being pressed to acknowledge the fact that physicians are seeking to stifle competition, thus exacerbating the inequalities in health between rural communities and urban centers of medicine.

The greatest surprise and most inspiring aspect of participating in the ENACT Labor Network fellowship was having the opportunity to interact with prominent economists and political advisors. For example, when meeting with Heidi Shierholz, I was in awe of the opportunity to speak with an economist who had served in the Obama administration. I was inspired by the chance to meet a successful female economist, and at the enthusiasm that she showed for my efforts to improve rural health access. I am not used to seeing women in economics, much less in such prominent positions. At that moment, my dreams felt more accessible to me than ever before. I will carry that realization with me any time that I experience doubt.

My best advice for future ELN Student Fellows would be to open oneself up to developing connections with others and using those connections to develop novel solutions or gain new perspectives.

Although I have studied political reform, immersing myself in it was entirely different than turning the pages of a textbook. I found myself working to bridge the gaps between individuals, which I feel is the purpose of good legislation. The human experience is just as integral to the process as technical understanding. I was thankful to have an opportunity to integrate political knowledge, economic understanding, and scientific principles to formulate a multifaceted solution to a multifaceted issue.



Dr. Katharine Owens

Connecticut – University of Hartford

Dr. Katharine Owens

ENACT Labor Network Faculty Fellow

Students Sydney Coleman and Alena Washington from the University of Hartford began by collaborating with me to learn more about labor issues in the state of Connecticut. In researching this field in Connecticut, we explored recently passed policies as well as those that failed to pass in the previous legislative session.

Our quest to better understand the scope of labor issues in the state led to early meetings with Jennifer Berigan of the Connecticut AFL-CIO. Through this data gathering process we narrowed the field to a handful of prospective bills that we thought would be important to follow during the 2020 legislative session. We focused on a bill on captive audiences and one on public employees joining a union (legislation aimed to mitigate the impacts of the US Supreme Court’s *Janus v. AFSCME* decision).

As ENACT Labor Network (ELN) Student Fellows, Sydney and Alena had the advantage of collaboration and discussions with the other ELN student fellows, as well as the opportunity to take part in meetings with policy experts and young political leaders.

We were quite fortunate that both Sydney and Alena were accepted for internships with the AFL-CIO office in Connecticut. This allowed them to learn skills, strategies, and also to better understand the stakeholders involved in policymaking in our state.

Our session was just getting busy when things were called off, but before the complications from COVID-19, students were able to attend internal and external meetings as well as hearings with Ms. Berigan. They both worked to interview people who would be impacted by the policies under consideration. Working with Ms. Berigan allowed the students to move beyond the knowledge typically relegated to textbooks or classroom discussions. In contrast, they were able to put concepts into practice.

The 2019-2020 academic year proved unusual for both students and faculty. Though the spring semester brought abrupt changes for all of us, the students gained valuable experience and irreplaceable first-hand knowledge during their work with the ENACT Labor Network.



Sydney Coleman
University of Hartford '21



“I learned so much about the policymaking process as well as the legislative process. I got familiar with bill tracking, updating, and prioritizing. I was able to learn about what lobbyists do and how much they care about these bills that represent so many influential people that are taken for granted.”

The Right of a Public Employee to Join or Support a Union

As an ENACT Labor Network (ELN) Student Fellow, I was able to connect with Connecticut’s AFL-CIO and focus on a crucial labor bill during this legislative session; HB 5720: An Act Concerning the Right of a Public Employee to Join or Support a Union. I chose this bill because I believe all employees must have the right to join a union since unions are essential in ensuring a safe and fair workplace.

HB 5720 provides public employees the right to join or support a union and ensures members have the right to meet with unions and hold meetings during the workday while ensuring a safe and fair worksite that offers clear methods of membership and dues collection.

I worked alongside another ELN Student Fellow, Alena Washington, who focused on a captive audience bill. We worked together to research and understand our prospective bills and also created story cards for legislators on the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

At the beginning of the spring semester, I began interning for the AFL-CIO in the legislative building in Hartford for the upcoming legislative session. During the internship, I had the opportunity to write testimony, get to know legislators, write for the weekly newsletter, track bills, and attend committee meetings and public hearings.

One of my biggest challenges during my ELN fellowship was educating Republican senators and representatives on the Labor and Public Employees Committee about the importance of the bills. It was a challenge to convey to them that this was an issue that affects many workers across Connecticut. Some thought that nobody in their district was affected, and leaned towards voting against it. Others were more concerned about how unions affect employers rather than employees.

This pushed me to research more and learn who is directly impacted by this bill. I eventually met Ally Sexton from the AFL-CIO, and was able to obtain the data detailing the number of union workers living in each town in Connecticut. Many of the Democrats on the Labor and Public Employees Committee sponsor a majority of the AFL-CIO’s bills and are pro-union, so they didn’t take much convincing.

During my internship, I sat in on many committee meetings. In the last meeting to raise bills before public hearings began, the Republican members on the Labor and Public Employees Committee were unsettled that so many Republican bills were cut in screening. They collectively attempted to run out the time remaining in the session and didn’t vote on a single bill on the agenda. They did this by asking many questions that were confusing and were not relevant to the bills. Over 14 bills died in committee since they weren’t raised and didn’t get the opportunity to be voted on.

This was an essential experience for me because it helped me see how politics actually functions and led me to not let my emotions cloud my thinking. Because many of the bills that didn’t get raised were very important to me and the room of people in the meeting, it hurt me to see that the trivial details were more significant to our legislators than helping the people that live in Connecticut. But observing the process in person and how it works helped me understand it.

I will be taking away a lot from this experience. I was introduced to a different world of politics working in the capital. I learned so much about the policymaking process as well as the legislative process. I got familiar with bill tracking, updating, and prioritizing. I was able to learn about what lobbyists do and how much they care about these bills that so many people take for granted.

This experience inspired me to continue my pursuit of politics and opened the world of lobbyists up to me. I would offer the following piece of advice to future ELN Student Fellows: take advantage of any and all opportunities that interest you. I took advantage of the opportunity to work with ENACT and then to work on a bill that the AFL-CIO was supporting. It led me to work in the Connecticut state capital, which introduced me to so many other opportunities! So, keep up the great work, the world is your oyster.



Alena Washington
University of Hartford '21



"Once I learned that employees were being forced to listen to speeches given by their employer...or they face unjust consequences, it seemed completely wrong and worth fighting for."

Captive Audience Meetings In the Workplace

During my ENACT Labor Network fellowship, I worked with the Connecticut AFL-CIO and focused on passing legislation that would end captive audience meetings in workplaces throughout the state. Once I learned that employees were being forced to listen to speeches given by their employer on topics such as politics, religion, and unionizing or face unjust consequences, it seemed completely wrong and worth fighting for change.

Looking back, I would say my time interning with the Connecticut AFL-CIO was the best part of the ELN experience. If given the chance, everyone should look into interning with a partner organization during their time with the ENACT Labor Network. However, this almost didn't happen: my biggest challenge was stepping out of my comfort zone and actually applying for the ENACT Labor Network. When I considered doing so I kept thinking I would never get in and that the chance would be slim so pushing myself to apply was my biggest struggle.

From this experience I will take the amazing connections I made with staff, volunteers and partners at the Connecticut AFL-CIO as well as with my advisor, Dr. Owens, who I previously had not had the chance to get to know. By participating in ENACT and the ELN Fellowship I was able to get to know her and work with her on a more personal level.

To future ELN Student Fellows I would say that you should treat this as if it is one of your classes and in doing so, make sure you do not overload your schedule. By treating the ELN fellowship as one of your classes, you will structure your semester or year in a way that is conducive to being able to put more time and energy in, just like you would a class.



Dr. Robert Glover

Maine – University of Maine

Dr. Robert Glover

ENACT Labor Network Faculty Fellow

This academic year, I had the pleasure of mentoring and supporting three University of Maine students as part of the ENACT Labor Network: Kevin Fitzpatrick, Elijah Munro-Ludders, and Harley Rogers. Though the COVID-19 crisis caused Maine’s legislative session to adjourn prematurely, the students got the opportunity to work closely with policy advocates and organizers at two of the state’s largest unions.

Over the course of the year, they provided research support, partook in policy development, helped craft talking points for advocacy efforts, met with lawmakers and executive branch officials, and so much more. Our weekly check-ins and ENACT-wide video conferences supplemented this hands-on work with a focus on the mechanics of Maine state policymaking and Maine political culture, as well as linking our students with the expertise of respected labor policy experts.

The students’ work covered a range of issues: addressing substandard labor practices in state sub-contracting; providing protections for communities facing closure of large employers; and ensuring a safe workplace free of risks such as asbestos and black mold in public buildings. And though the Maine State Legislature had to postpone consideration of the active legislation that students were working on due to COVID-19, important momentum was made towards policy solutions in a future special session or subsequent regular session in 2021.

As we know, policy battles on complex issues are often a “marathon” rather than a “sprint.” And the work that our Maine ELN students so capably and diligently executed this academic year will play an important role in the next leg of the race.



Kevin Fitzpatrick
University of Maine '21



“Of the skills and knowledge, I’ve gained along the way, the most important to me and my future prospects are that of legal research. I want to make a career for myself in that type of field and feel confident that the ENACT Fellowship has provided me with those skills.”

Protecting State Workers from Carcinogens

When I embarked on the ENACT Labor Network (ELN) policy fellowship, I was struck at the breadth of knowledge I had yet to learn about the legislative and advocacy process. I was even more struck at how invested I became in my topic, one not often discussed at parties: asbestos regulations for workers. Some may find this boring, but as time went by and more and more of the process became clear to me I shifted my thinking, focusing more on the means by which we create change rather than the ends.

This new perspective changed my perception of “political advocacy” and further emboldened me to pursue other issues regarding labor, and working on asbestos regulations highlighted the extent to which the labor fight must continue on.

When looking back at the choices I made during this fellowship, I find myself going back to when we were choosing our projects for the year.

We were given the choice of four options, all varying in the way they were to develop. Some students were working directly on a bill that had already been introduced, others were working on more long-term projects built to support larger issues, and some were creating policy from the ground up and pushing for said change as soon as possible.

Although asbestos regulation isn’t glamorous, it gave me the chance to see the legislative process from the very beginning to the very end and that is what I wanted most out of this fellowship: the opportunity to see how it’s all made and, if lucky, see how it becomes reality.

If I were to give myself one piece of advice at the start of this fellowship, it would be to not let the bad times get you down.

And there were bad times, one of which was especially demoralizing. For weeks my contact from the Maine State Employees Association and I worked and theorized about what we would want from a bill regarding asbestos in workplaces: statewide tracking in all public buildings, better standards for air quality, and more ideas that seek a better working environment for those most at risk. However, we were not experts, so we met with one of the leading experts within the Department of Labor in Maine to speak to her and a colleague about our proposals and how we would like to see the Department function with this system.

In short, the meeting did not go well. The Department of Labor was extremely resistant to many of the proposals, but in a way that highlighted the flaws in our thinking about the issues. They gave us new suggestions and even sent us down a road towards a policy solution that we never even thought of, that of black mold regulations. The existing regulations for black mold in Maine had not been updated for years and there was no mandate for the state to properly enforce the “recommended” EPA regulation.

— continued —

If I was to turn this challenge into a piece of advice, I would say that one should always consult with the experts because even if they dash much of your policy hopes, you still walk away with a new perspective and the ability to shift gears.

Of the skills and knowledge I've gained along the way, the most important to me and my future prospects is that of legal research. I want to make a career for myself in that type of field and feel confident that the ENACT Labor Network Fellowship has provided me with those skills.

Although it ended in an anticlimactic and also somehow climactic way, ELN has surely changed my academic career and my life entirely.



Eli Munro-Ludders
University of Maine '21



“Over the course of the year I studied specific state contracts and the companies who held them and compiled policy briefs on each. Most of these entities fail to meet their contractual stipulations leading to the failure to provide services, lawsuits, and even deaths.”

Privatization of State Services

As an ENACT Labor Network (ELN) Student Fellow this academic year, I have studied the rise in usage of the political phenomenon known as subcontracting. This practice, in essence, is a method of delegating state services to companies or other third parties who believe their capability to operate efficiently enables them to spend less on the provision of said services than what the state allots for their provision. Third parties then compete for these state contracts in a closed bidding process.

Contracts offered by the state require that the delegated services provided by the third party must be afforded to required state or national constituents and must be furnished with the same quality and efficiency constituents would typically enjoy if provided by the state or federal government itself. The state is able to provide services cheaply and third parties can make substantial profit margins if they operate efficiently — that is, in theory. This theory fails in praxis.

Over the course of the year I studied specific state contracts and the companies who held them and compiled policy briefs on each. Most of these entities fail to meet their contractual stipulations such as in circumstances of prison healthcare (Wellpath Inc.), professional rehabilitation (Fedcap Inc.), and transportation services (Mancon L.L.C.) leading to the failure to provide services, lawsuits, and even deaths.

In addition to my studies on this topic, I worked with the Maine State Employees Union (MSEA), the local division of the Service Employees International Union, advocating for L.D. 1458 — a bill that gives the Department of Labor a legislative mechanism to oversee and terminate relationships with subcontractors in violation of their contracts with the state.

L.D. 1458 passed committee as ought to pass but was subsequently tabled after the Maine State Legislature shut down as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Much of my work was mentored by my fellowship advisor and ELN Faculty Fellow, Dr. Rob Glover, who is a phenomenal representative of ENACT at the University of Maine. Additionally, whenever I felt the need to seek support, I felt that the ENACT network did well to service that need and consistently extended offers to do so.



Harley Rogers
University of Maine '20



“During my interviews with members of the labor movement and mill workers, I experience such an immense sense of gratitude from everyone I spoke too. The people were so thankful that someone was looking out for them.”

Good Faith Offer of Sale Legislation for Mill Closures

Maine has faced well over a dozen mill closures in the last 20 years. These mills often are the main source of jobs and income for rural communities in the state. When mills are closed by companies, often only looking to limit competition, it has devastating effects on the surrounding community.

Under the instruction of Maine’s AFL-CIO, I researched the history and possible implementation of a good faith offer of sale bill. The legislation would require companies to offer their mill up for sale at market value if they wanted to close it, rather than a complete closure. I collected data on specific mill closures and their unique circumstances by reading news articles and interviewing individuals impacted by the closures. I also spent a significant time research comparable legislation from other states.

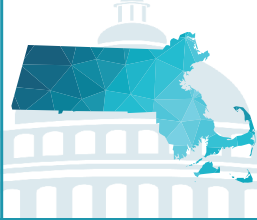
The labor movement in Maine has tried to pass this sort of legislation for decades, to no avail, and it was difficult to do legislative research on laws that have not been written anywhere in the United States yet. This required me to look at similar concepts in other states, but it was hard to draw the comparison to Maine’s unique situation. Many of the ideas that I had have already been attempted. It was my challenge to add a new perspective to the proposed solutions.

During my interviews with members of the labor movement and mill workers, I experienced such an immense sense of gratitude from everyone I spoke to. The people were so thankful that someone was looking out for them. Every person in Maine either worked in a mill, had a family member in a mill, or knew someone who worked in a mill. When mills shut down, other businesses follow, and the whole community takes a hit.

This bill would limit the frequency of mill closures or have stipulations in place to soften the initial impact of the closure. My biggest takeaway from this project was how significant my work was. I was not a part of the effort to pass legislation, but my data collection will allow for future arguments to be made to support this sort of legislation.

My advice to students looking to jump into legislative advocacy would be to recognize your ability to have a real impact on your state. The issue that you decide to take on will have real outcomes.

When I came into this fellowship, I did not realize how eye-opening it would be and how invested I would become in my single issue. Pick an issue you are ready to invest a whole year (and maybe longer!) on and jump in!



Melissa Stimell

Massachusetts – Brandeis University

Melissa Stimell

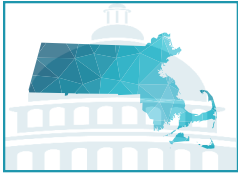
ENACT Academic Program Director, ENACT Labor Network Faculty Fellow

In the 2019-20 academic year, I had the pleasure of working with Brandeis student Elaina Pevide. Elaina focused on legislation requiring predictive scheduling for low-wage workers.

For part of the year Elaina was joined in her work by Alina Sipp-Alpers '21, a fellow Brandeis Labor Coalition member who, like Elaina, focused her academic studies on labor issues. Alina focused on legislation assisting previously incarcerated workers, and together both Elaina and Alina informed the Brandeis campus community on their issues and the plight of vulnerable workers in Massachusetts.

Over the course of the year, Elaina built on her work with advocates at Jobs for Justice, interviewed workers who described the lack of control over daily life due to their chaotic work schedules, connected with valuable allies, developed a media campaign, and lobbied legislators. In the fall Elaina also supported the work of fellow students in my Brandeis ENACT course.

Though legislators were immersed in the COVID-19 crisis in the final months of the academic year, Elaina Pevide's work as an ENACT Labor Network Student Fellow will help provide a basis for moving forward in the next legislative session.



Fair Scheduling for Employees

Elaina Pevide
Brandeis University '20



“My time with ELN was enlightening in a variety of ways. It took my rough, unshaped passion for labor and economic justice and turned it into a focused, educated understanding of the world of labor policy.”

During my time with ENACT, I chose to focus on the Massachusetts Fair Workweek bill. The proposed legislation would require employers in the food, retail and hospitality industries to give their employees reliable weekly schedules two weeks in advance (amongst other benefits) in an effort to stabilize the erratic lifestyles and paychecks associated with hourly work.

I chose this bill because it seemed to encompass the intersection of labor and gender that I find most interesting — a connection I made based originally on the bill's implications for working mothers and childcare. My further research on the bill over the year revealed a larger, unexpected picture. I learned that the hourly, low wage workforce was made up of mostly women, women of color, women with families and older women who used hourly wages as their livelihood.

This humbling discovery illuminated a larger pattern to me and contributed to a massive research paper I wrote in the fall on women's labor issues, where my core argument was that our valuation, structure and support of different labor is used to perpetuate inequalities along racial and gender lines.

My time as an ENACT Labor Network fellow was enlightening in a variety of ways. It took my rough, unshaped passion for labor and economic justice and turned it into a focused, educated understanding of the world of labor policy.

During my junior year, I had proposed my own major in public policy because I hoped to get a practical, well-rounded, experiential education on how to create political and social change. This meant I did not have a major department or a targeted education in policy change during my time at Brandeis until I started working with ENACT.

I am incredibly grateful for the exposure to the world of labor policy and the state legislature that this year with ENACT and ELN has given me. I have gained a working understanding of the political process that, after interning in the Massachusetts State House this spring, I realize many entry-level staffers do not have.

Additionally, our expert speakers gave me insight into the state and federal ecosystem of labor policy and advocacy that is invaluable as I graduate and decide where and how to start my career. I was encouraged to try my hand at a variety of tasks and projects in support of my legislation that have provided me with valuable skills I will use once I join the workforce.

My time in the fall as an ELN Fellow gave me unparalleled support from Melissa Stimell and David Weinstein, and I started the ENACT Advocacy for Policy Change course in the spring ready to hit the ground running while supporting my classmates.

— continued —

ENACT has also granted me a fantastic network of like-minded individuals. My work on the fair workweek legislation has allowed me to build connections with the organizers at Jobs with Justice that continues to this day. On the smallest level, I know I have lifelong allies in the faculty and experts I have met at Brandeis. I value the connections I have made with the ELN fellows, who have similar passions and interests to myself. The expert speakers were friendly and open, and the ENACT alumni I have met have the same willingness to share their experiences.

All in all, the skills I have gained, the connections I have made and the immense amount of knowledge I have accumulated with ENACT make me feel more prepared for a career in advocacy and policymaking. I know more about the process and more about my own interests and options in the workforce.

It is a rare opportunity to gain such practical experience in the field you're interested in before graduation, and I feel empowered by what ELN and the ENACT Network has given me.



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