



Testimony in Support of LD 545:

“An Act to Exempt a Person Making Electrical Installations in the Person's Existing Bona Fide Personal Abode from Licensing and Permitting Requirements”

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and the distinguished members of the Committee On Labor, my name is Harris Van Pate and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 545, which would exempt homeowners performing electrical work in their own homes from burdensome licensing and permitting requirements.

Restoring Property Rights and Personal Responsibility

LD 545 is a necessary reform that restores an individual's right to maintain and improve property without excessive government interference. Under current law, homeowners must obtain expensive permits and hire state-licensed electricians to perform even essential electrical work in their homes. This restriction undermines the principle of personal responsibility and self-sufficiency, imposing unnecessary costs on Maine homeowners who can safely perform these tasks themselves.

Across the country, states recognize the importance of allowing homeowners to perform work in their own homes. Maine should follow suit by removing these unnecessary regulatory barriers. Similar exemptions exist in numerous states, reflecting a broader recognition that the government should not unduly restrict homeowners from making reasonable improvements to their property.

Reducing Unnecessary Costs and Bureaucratic Burdens

The existing licensing and permitting requirements for residential electrical work put an undue financial burden on Maine homeowners. These costs are particularly harmful for low- and middle-income families who may struggle to afford the added expense of hiring a licensed electrician for minor repairs or upgrades.

The permitting process is often bureaucratic and time-consuming, requiring homeowners to navigate layers of red tape for projects that pose little to no risk when performed responsibly. By eliminating these requirements, LD 545 would allow homeowners to save money and time while ensuring that electrical work is done safely and effectively.

Encouraging Practical Skills and Workforce Development



Allowing homeowners to perform electrical work in their homes can also contribute to skill development and greater self-reliance. Many Mainers already possess the knowledge and experience necessary to undertake minor electrical projects safely, whether through personal experience, online education, or vocational training. Restricting their ability to do so discourages hands-on learning and reduces opportunities for individuals to develop valuable trade skills.

Furthermore, with Maine facing a labor shortage in the skilled trades, this reform could alleviate pressure on professional electricians by allowing them to focus on larger, more complex projects rather than minor residential work that homeowners can complete on their own.

Ensuring Safety Through Personal Accountability

Opponents of LD 545 may raise safety concerns, but such arguments fail to recognize that homeowners are vested in ensuring that their electrical work is performed safely and correctly. Unsafe electrical work directly risks the homeowner and their family, providing strong natural incentives for individuals to follow best practices. Additionally, homeowners uncertain about their abilities will still have the option to hire professional electricians.

Maine already recognizes that individuals should control their property in other home repair and maintenance areas. Electrical work should be no different, especially for those making home improvements rather than commercial properties or rental units. Furthermore, before PL 2017 Chapter 198, this behavior was perfectly legal, and the removal was likely accidental.

Conclusion

LD 545 is a common sense measure that upholds individual property rights, reduces unnecessary costs, and encourages personal responsibility while maintaining safety through homeowner accountability. It aligns Maine with best practices in other states and helps reduce government overreach into private property matters.

For these reasons, Maine Policy Institute strongly urges this committee to support LD 545 and pass it into law. Thank you for your time and consideration.