

Testimony of Beau Libby, UA Local 716, in support of LD 946, "Resolve, to Increase Access to Energy Efficiency Programs by Low-income and Moderate-income Residents"

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Beau Libby and I'm here today to speak in support of LD 946.

I have been a member of the United Association and Local 716 Plumbers, Pipefitters & HVAC Technicians Union since 1997. I successfully completed a five-year, 10,000-hour registered apprenticeship program and have worked as a pipe welder, pipefitter or a HVAC tech/installer until approximately 2018. Currently, I serve on the Maine State Fuel Board and hold several licenses, including a master oil license under 15 gallons, a journeyman oil license over 15 gallons, a gas license with a large endorsement, OSHA 30 certification, EP608, among various other trade certifications.

For the past seven years, I have been employed as a union organizer. A significant portion of my role involves engaging with non-union workers at their job sites, in their work vans, during lunch breaks, while they refuel their vehicles, and even on rooftops. I also meet with many of the companies employing these workers to discuss the opportunities and resources available to both their businesses and their employees.

Throughout my work, I have heard numerous accounts from workers and contractors regarding substandard practices within the heat pump industry. Many describe it as "the wild west," referring to contractors who lack the necessary state licenses and/or certifications to ensure the best warranty thru the manufacturer for the customer. Some of these contractors will knowingly employ unlicensed, under skilled and untrained workers, some even fail to possess the proper tools and equipment for the proper installation of heat pumps. These shortcomings will often result in subpar work with frequent callbacks. Consequently, leaving Maine customers to incur additional costs, be left with malfunctioning units requiring repairs, and potentially forfeit proper warranties from manufacturers due to improper installation or lack of licenses and certifications...

It is already challenging enough for a reputable and compliant company to compete in today's market, but it becomes nearly impossible against those unscrupulous contractors who knowingly disregard established guidelines and laws set to keep contractors honest. Many compliant companies may and will choose not to bid on projects altogether, deeming it a waste of time and resources. By incorporating responsible contracting language—such as utilization

of a registered apprenticeship program, prevailing wages, better training, etc... we can ensure that Maine's customers will receive the highest quality installation which is funded by state tax dollars. This should also encompass the best possible warranties from the manufacturers, proper installations by licensed technicians that have adequate training with safety measures. Improved wages, benefits, safety, and training ultimately benefit all Maine workers. To be clear, this is not about unions or non-union, it's about protecting the Maine tax payers, making sure Maine workers are getting what they deserve, prevents outside contractors from coming into Maines towns to undercut the compliant contractors trying to do the right thing. This is also the best way to attract and retain our workforce.

Honestly, my most significant takeaway from my all experiences as a organizer is that it does not matter whether one is a union or a non-union worker. All honest, hard-working people who rise each day and go to work and grind for the better of themselves or their family deserve to be treated fairly and with respect and dignity, along with being paid a good wage with benefits. I believe this bill will play a vital role to ensuring that these principles and standards are upheld.

Let's not forget...a rising tide will raise all the boats.