

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology my name is Scott Cuddy and I am here representing IBEW 1253. We are here in support of LD 1868.

I have lived experience about how high labor standards can benefit the people who do the actual work of improving our energy production in Maine.

Years ago, I worked as a non-union laborer. I had no health insurance, no retirement, only a wage. I was taken advantage of and it was pure luck that I never needed health insurance while I was working as a laborer. Joining the IBEW has been amazing for me on a number of levels.

Toward the end of last year I was diagnosed with colon cancer. I had surgery, and when that wasn't sufficient to remove all of the cancer from me I endured 3 months of chemotherapy. During this time, my union health insurance allowed me to go on a short term disability that paid significantly more than Social Security Disability would have on a weekly basis, *and* they picked up the tab for my monthly insurance premium while I was on Disability. When I'm working, my employer pays the entirety of my monthly premium. I don't pay a dime for it. That's what the plan picked up when I went out.

Of course we still have a deductible and co-insurance like any other plan, \$1,000 deductible and 90/10 co-insurance, but my stress level was much lower because I wasn't scrambling to figure out how to pay for my health insurance at the time that I needed it most. I got one form signed by my oncologist every six weeks and I was done.

When the state makes policy to ensure that we're moving in the right direction by building ANYTHING, we should include labor standards that ensure the people doing the work are properly taken care of. We can't simply say every worker has to be in a union, but we should demand that every worker get pay and benefits that are as close to union as possible. When we leave it to the free market, we send the employees into a race to the bottom. If we don't include labor standards, employees are at the mercy of a system that rewards low pay and minimal, if any, benefits.

We've already recognized this in areas where the state actually pays the bills, such as road or school construction, but we should adopt this posture in any area where the state is incentivizing building anything. Because when the state does something like establishing a schedule of procurements, we know that there will be a flood of work associated with it. If that work has no labor standards, the state will effectively push wages down for employees by awarding projects to the lowest bidder. If we *do* include labor standards, we can ensure that the employees have a floor that they cannot fall below.

Thank you for your time and attention, and please vote ought to pass as amended on LD 1868. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.