

Kendall Cooper
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Support of LD1957 // Opposition to LD1493

I am a proud Mainer. Born and raised, and my family has been here for 6 generations. I am also an incredibly hard worker. I credit this to being born and raised in Maine. Everytime I call my Dad to update him about my career he says, "Well, I'm not surprised. You've got that Maine work ethic." I am a Casting Director who has been working in the professional Film and TV industry for over 10 years. I own my own company and have found great success in my career, all due to that Maine work ethic.

Some of my previous casting credits include; Greta Gerwig's *Little Women*, *Hocus Pocus 2*, *Homeland*, *Dopesick*, *The Walking Dead:Dead City*, and *Succession* to name a few. Since moving back to Maine I still work on those big projects, but I have to travel out of state to do so. Or sometimes I get lucky and can work from home and stay in Maine!

Where was I living before moving back home? You may be thinking LA or New York? No. Actually, I was living in Richmond, Virginia. Most people don't know that Virginia has a film industry, but they do. They have a competitive tax incentive program, a passionate film office, working closely with the Virginia Tourism office to capitalize on the economic opportunity when films come to shoot in Virginia.

My first time on set I was amazed that 90% of the crew were local Virginia residents who worked full time in the film industry and *lived* in Virginia. These crew members were; carpenters, painters, van drivers, truck drivers, electricians, accountants. They worked in departments like props, set-decoration, sound, camera, hair, make-up, wardrobe, and so many more. I couldn't believe that I could have a rich and sustained career in the film industry and NOT have to live in New York or LA. I loved my time working in Virginia, but it wasn't home.

I am now 34 years old and I'm asking myself, "Where do I want to settle down and start my family?", "Where do I want to raise my kids?" The answer is Maine. The answer has always been Maine, but there was a problem. Working full time in the film industry, I worried that moving back home, I would not be able to sustain my career and support my budding family.

When I was growing up here, everyone thought you had to leave the state in order to truly pursue a career in the arts. That has started to change over the past 20 years, and I would like to see it change even further. Wouldn't it be great if our young, creative, hardworking Mainers who grow up here, didn't feel like they have to leave the state in order to hone their craft? In order to find viable career opportunities?

Since moving back to Maine in 2020, I have been working regularly in the local film scene. I have cast local actors and extras for a handful of independent feature films, documentaries and I have also begun casting for commercials filmed in Maine. In my experience commercials are the primary source of income for film professionals living and working full time in our state. That or people regularly travel out of state for the majority of their work. I look forward to us building our local narrative film incentives to encourage more work narrative to come to our state. But in the meantime, the local commercial film industry is vital for our local film professionals. That work has personally helped me pay my mortgage and put food on the table since my move back to Maine.

Films are no longer shooting in only NY or LA. The productions go where the tax incentives are, and when Maine approves tax incentives, the films will come. When they come, they will bring good paying, exciting jobs and numerous economic growth for our beautiful state. They will hire local people and they will spend money at our hotels, restaurants and businesses. I have seen the exponential economic growth films have brought to other states and I hope Maine can use this opportunity to its advantage.

As a film industry professional and as a Mainer. I am strongly against LD1493. I am in full support of LD1957.

Sincerely,
Kendall Cooper

Kendall Cooper Casting
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Kendall Cooper of Portland, ME - Casting Director / Owner "Kendall Cooper Casting"
Father: Craig Cooper of Cape Elizabeth, ME - Contractor / Owner "Rainbow Construction"
Grandfather: Woodrow Cooper of Portland, ME - Engineer at Bath Iron Works
Great-Grandfather: Leonard Cooper of Whitefeild, ME - Farmer