

CIANBRO

LD-838, “An Act to Explore Public Financing and Ownership of Electric Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure” (1-20-2026)

Good afternoon Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and respective members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. My name is Tim C. Walton, I am a resident of Livermore and I am here today on behalf of CIANBRO Corporation in opposition to LD-838, “An Act to Explore Public Financing and Ownership of Electric Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure”. A 100% employee-owned construction and construction services firm headquartered in Pittsfield, Maine, CIANBRO routinely operates in over 40 States, employing over 4,000 team members; over 1,300 of which are Maine residents.

Although presented as a “concept draft”, we understand this legislation will offer language that should be of significant concern to all Maine taxpayers and ratepayers alike.

First, by requiring a Harmony Agreement, which is just another name for a Project Labor Agreement (PLA), on the work captured in this legislation, a strong case could be made that the actual outcome will be far from harmonious. In fact, we believe the adverse impact would be realized. Placing PLAs on this work will ensure that nearly 90% of Maine’s construction workforce, who “choose” to work in a non-union capacity, will be locked out of working on these projects, work that in many cases is funded by their own tax dollars.

For your reference, in part, a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) is a bargaining agreement with one or more labor organizations that establishes the employment terms and conditions for a specific construction project. PLAs often require that employees hired for the project must be hired through the union halls; that nonunion workers are forced to pay union dues for the length of the project; and that the contractor must follow union rules on pensions, work conditions and dispute resolution. These exclusive union procurement and project restrictions discourage open-shop contractors from pursuing work where PLAs are engaged. As previously mentioned, in Maine where the open-shop construction workforce is overwhelming in numbers compared to that of organized labor’s ranks, if this bill were to pass, the revenue the State derives from these jobs would be a staggering loss, as the majority of workers and contractors would come from out-of-state, taking their money with them when they leave for home.

Another point of reference, over the years PLAs have surfaced by several alternative names, including, but not limited to: Community Workforce Agreements; Pre-Hire Collective Bargaining Agreements; Responsible Contractor Agreements; Project Stabilization Agreements; etc.

Additionally, we understand this bill would create an unelected energy authority with excessive power; a real potential threat of takings by eminent domain on private landowners; and unnecessary debt passed onto ratepayers. All while lacking any clear evidence that public ownership will improve outcomes or achieve savings to ratepayers.

In closing, we'd like to leave you with this perspective. Respectfully, we believe rather than promoting the passage of bills like this, Maine would benefit more from legislation that seeks to foster a win-win-win situation. Opportunities where the State wins by fostering and promoting a competitive procurement environment; the workforce wins by enjoying better pay and benefits which are a result of a competitive marketplace; and the company contracting the work wins by being able to continue to operate in a competitive market. This would put Maine on the path of long-term stability and economic prosperity.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our position on this matter.