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Testimony of Representative Sophie Warren Presenting
**L.D. 725, Resolve, Directing the Efficiency Maine Trust to Study the Quality
of the Jobs it Creates in Consultation with an Advisory Group**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor

Good morning, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and respected colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor. Thank you for the opportunity to present the sponsor amendment to **L.D. 725, Resolve, Directing the Efficiency Maine Trust to Study the Quality of the Jobs it Creates in Consultation with an Advisory Group**.

I want to begin by sharing the background of this bill and what brings it before you this morning. In the first session of this Legislature, I introduced a bill¹ to establish minimum thresholds for rebates to low and moderate-income Mainers in the next triennial plan of Efficiency Maine Trust.² That bill also included a provision, later removed, that would have established certain labor standards³ connected to the fields in which those rebate dollars are invested. At the time, the Trust expressed that there was insufficient evidence to support changes in this area.⁴

That process, however, was constructive. It revealed a clear opportunity to build on the strong work the Trust has already done in fulfilling its mission, and to more fully advance its statutory mandate to track “the number of new jobs created by the award of trust funds”⁵ and to

¹ **LD 946:** https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?PID=1456&snum=132&paper=&paperId=l&ld=946#.

² <https://www.efficiencymaine.com/about/>.

³ **LD 946: Sections on Prevailing Wages & Registered Apprenticeships.** At that time, we sought to ensure all employers that receive state-funded rebates pay prevailing wage. In a similar vein, the Registered Apprenticeship component established a structured approach to ensure that employers benefiting from state rebates were fully committed to recruiting, training, and retaining the next generation of workers. See <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=187526>.

⁴ **Testimony on LD 946 by Trust Director Michael Stoddard:** “Anecdotally, these are good paying jobs at good wages. Typical starting wages for weatherization technicians is \$20/hour; typical starting wages for heat pump installers is closer to \$25/hour. There are currently 68 firms registered with Efficiency Maine to provide home weatherization services; more than 600 firms and individuals are registered to install home heat pumps. (Additionally, firms provide similar services for commercial customers.) Nearly all of these firms are family-owned, small businesses, commonly having fewer than 30 employees. The Trust has required and supported training to ensure these trades people deliver quality work to Maine consumers. The Trust's programs provide scholarships for people in the trades to attend courses in the Community College system, or at the Maine Energy Marketers Association, or other qualified locations.” Via <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=187529>.

⁵ “. . . develop quantifiable performance metrics for all programs it administers and to which it will hold accountable all recipients of funding from the trust and recipients of funds used . . . the number of new jobs created by the award of trust funds” See Title 35-A: Public Utilities, Chapter 97: Efficiency Maine Trust Act, § 10104. Duties via <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/35-a/title35-Asec10104.html>.

meet their statutory goal of “creating stable private-sector jobs providing alternative energy and energy-efficiency products and services in the State.”⁶⁷

At a time when we see the threat of climate change at our shores, in our droughts, by our air and through our storms,⁸ Maine faces a persistent labor shortage, including within the critical fields we need to face this crisis. It is essential we attract and retain a skilled workforce to meeting our climate goals. This bill reflects the connection between our workforce and the immense effort our state is undertaking to fight climate change, while acknowledging the lessons learned from that earlier effort.

It proposes a practical step in establishing specific and quantifiable performance metrics to evaluating energy efficiency jobs administered by the Trust, and for recipients of Trust funding. This is not a new policy direction, but a furtherance of the Trust’s existing statutory obligations. It seeks to ensure we have the information necessary to understand where we are, where we are succeeding, and where improvements are possible.

As part of last year’s work, and in uplifting the intersection of labor and climate, I also had the benefit of speaking with members of the Maine Labor Climate Council about conditions on the ground in heat-pump installation and other residential and commercial energy-efficiency fields. Those conversations highlighted both the importance of these workers to Maine’s clean-energy transition and the need for better information to ensure that the growth of these sectors translates into stable, safe, high-quality jobs.

This bill builds directly on those public discussions and advances the Trust’s core mission in job creation by assuring measurement and tracking of the current landscape of workforce, retention, recruitment, and job quality. By systematically collecting and evaluating quantitative data, we can better understand how the enormous public investment the Trust stewards and the employers that benefit are contributing to workforce development, where gaps exist, and how both public and private investments can be aligned to strengthen Maine’s workforce.

The framework draws on well-established best practices in workforce policy and reflects the principles of climate justice outlined by the Maine Climate Council—particularly **Strategy D: Create Jobs and Grow Maine’s Economy Through Climate Action**, as well as the final recommendations of the **2023 Equity Subcommittee report**.⁹

⁶ “. . . The plan must set forth the costs and benefits of the trust’s programs that advance the following goals and funding necessary to meet those goals: [. . .] (5) Creating stable private sector jobs providing alternative energy and energy efficiency products and services in the State” See Title 35-A: Public Utilities, Chapter 97: Efficiency Maine Trust Act, § 10104. Duties via <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/35-a/title35-Asec10104.html>.

⁷ “9. Coordination with other entities . . . energy efficiency or green energy workforce development activities of the Department of Labor or the State Workforce Development Board established in Title 26, section 2006,” See Title 35-A: Public Utilities, Chapter 97: Efficiency Maine Trust Act, § 10104. Duties via <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/35-a/title35-Asec10104.html>.

⁸ https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/STS_2024_digital.pdf.

⁹ In addition to this ongoing work, the ESC recommends the goals and actions below for incorporation into the state’s climate action plan. These goals are meant to achieve more equitable outcomes for priority populations and communities by addressing barriers to employment in clean energy and natural resource industries, as well as by providing additional employment resources for workers or industries facing disproportionate climate risks. Priority individuals include but are not limited to migrant workers in natural resource industries, particularly those with limited English proficiency or lack of awareness of or hesitancy to exercise workplace protections due to permit and visa concerns. In addition, they include young Mainers, New Mainers, underemployed and unemployed people, who may lack access to capital and land to enter the market or expand operations, who may have limited

That strategy calls for strengthening and growing Maine's climate-ready workforce by:

- Creating opportunities for 7,000 new registered apprentices by 2030
- Bringing more **non-traditional workers and underserved populations** into **quality jobs** in the trades and other climate-related fields
- **Improving licensing pathways** into the trades, manufacturing, and natural-resource industries
- Connecting **young people** to climate careers through programs such as the Maine Climate Corps, pre-apprenticeships, technical education, and paid work experiences¹⁰¹¹

As one such example to highlight various needs, the Equity subcommittee highlighted a 2021 report finding women only make up 26% clean energy workforce in Maine, compared to 52% of the state's overall workforce, "a similar trend seen across the clean energy industry." As they also highlighted: "The clean energy transition will have a transformative economic impact in Maine. However, attracting and training the necessary workforce will take new models and locations of training, and attention to reducing barriers in order attract workers traditionally underrepresented in the energy sector and building trades."¹²

In 2024, the Governor's Energy Office¹³ launched the Maine Clean Energy Jobs Network, which identifies energy efficiency as the largest clean-energy employment sector in the state (more than 8,600 jobs across 1,500 business locations). Yet we still lack clear information about the Trust's role within that sector. Given the scale of public investment, alongside substantial private-sector contributions, this is a significant gap.

We should be able to answer basic questions: What are average wages, conditions, demographics and geographic regions within the workforce these public investments create? What is working well? Where are the bottlenecks? How effective are our programs in building a stable, skilled workforce? Without consistent, program-level data, it is difficult to learn from experience, improve outcomes, or fully account for the return on public investment.

or non-transferrable experience or credentials, and who may, in the case of New Mainers and other BIPOC individuals, face cultural or other unique barriers to entry into this sector. Finally, they may include other Maine people who face barriers to accessing workforce training opportunities, such as lack of access to transportation, childcare, or inability to participate in unpaid training opportunities; or who are disproportionately underrepresented in these fields, such as women. Priority communities include areas with high proportions of the population employed in agriculture, fishing, or forestry, where local economies, livelihoods, and cultures depend on these industries." Page 47, https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/Maine%20Climate%20Council_Equity%20Subcommittee%20Final%20Report_March%202023.pdf.

¹⁰ Maine Climate Council, specifically **Strategy D: Create Jobs and Grow Maine's Economy Through Climate Action** (beginning on Page 93 via https://www.maine.gov/climateplan/sites/maine.gov.climateplan/files/2024-11/MWW_2024_Book_112124.pdf).

¹¹ **2024 Maine Climate Council, Page 101:** "An investment of \$12.3 million through the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan has already doubled the number of apprentices in Maine registered with the U.S. Department of Labor and led to the creation of dozens of new pre-apprenticeship programs. **Sustaining investment to maintain and grow this effective employment model is essential to advancing climate goals.**" Via https://www.maine.gov/climateplan/sites/maine.gov.climateplan/files/2024-11/MWW_2024_Book_112124.pdf.

¹² https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/Maine%20Climate%20Council_Equity%20Subcommittee%20Final%20Report_March%202023.pdf.

¹³ See <https://mainecleanenergyjobs.com/energy-efficiency/>.

The Trust itself has stated that its programs “have had tremendous success in adding good jobs to the Maine economy”¹⁴ by building demand for equipment and the services needed to sell, install, operate, and maintain it. I, and many advocates, agree with that sentiment, but it’s not one that can be quantified, evaluated, learned from, or improved, especially consistent with the state’s goal of 30,000 clean energy jobs by 2030.

The goal is to build on success, to define it more clearly, measure it more precisely, and understand how job quality and workforce stability fit into the broader climate and economic strategy of this state.

In closing, I hope this hearing can be a productive dialogue. I welcome your questions, and I also look forward to hearing from other perspectives, including those of the Maine Labor Climate Council and stakeholders. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹⁴ Via <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=187529>.

LD 725 – An Act to Advance Equitable Energy Policy in Maine

Amend the title of the bill to read as follows:

Resolve, Directing The Efficiency Maine Trust to Study the Quality of the Jobs it Creates in Consultation with an Advisory Group

Amend the bill by striking out everything after the enacting clause and before the summary and inserting the following:

Sec. 1. Efficiency Maine Trust Study. **Resolved:** That Efficiency Maine Trust, established in the Maine Revised Statute Title 35-A, section 10103 and referred to in this resolve as the “trust,” shall study, within existing resources, the quality of jobs created due to projects funded by the trust pursuant to Title 35-A, section 10104. The trust shall convene an advisory group to inform and consult on the study.

Sec. 2. Advisory group members. **Resolved:** The director of the trust or the director’s designee shall participate in the advisory group and shall invite the participation in the advisory group of the following additional members: one Senator who is a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor; one Representative who is a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor; one member representing the Department of Labor who has knowledge of employee training practices; one member representing a labor organization; one member representing the community college system who works in the teaching of trades; and one member who is a director of a registered apprenticeship program pursuant to Title 26.

Sec. 3. Advisory group; duties. **Resolved:** The advisory group shall:

1. Review the wages and retirement benefits provided by employers that have received at least \$5,000 of rebates from the trust in the past year. In its review, the advisory group must review data that provides an analysis of the wages and benefits provided by the employer, on average and in aggregate;
2. Determine the number of employees receiving health insurance from employers that have received at least \$5,000 of rebates from the trust in the past year ;
3. Evaluate the training programs available to and utilized by craft employees of employers that have received at least \$5,000 of rebates from the trust in the past . In its evaluation, the advisory group shall review the number of employees who were hired through a registered apprenticeship program and promoted to journeymen, and the number of employees who were hired holding no apprenticeship status;
4. Review data on the number of employees injured while working on projects funded by the trust;

5. Evaluate the demographics of employees, including but not limited to geographic location, age, gender and ethnicity; and
6. Identify any workforce development gaps or needs, and what plans are currently in place to resolve these gaps or needs.

Sec. 4. Report. Resolved: That, no later than January 31, 2027, the director of the trust shall submit a report setting forth the findings and recommendations of the advisory group to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over labor matters. The committee may report out a bill related to the report to the 133rd Legislature in 2027.

SUMMARY

This resolve changes the title of and replaces the bill, which is a concept draft. It directs Efficiency Maine Trust to evaluate the workforce and compensation of employees of projects funded by the trust. Efficiency Maine Trust shall convene an advisory group that will inform and consult on the evaluation. The director of the Efficiency Maine Trust is directed to report the findings and recommendations of the advisory group to the joint standing committee of the legislature having jurisdiction over labor matters, which may report out a bill to the 133rd Legislature in 2027.