

Testimony from Kimberly Tobias, in Support of L.D. 1818, "An Act Regarding Port Facilities Relating to Offshore Wind Power Projects"

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Kimberly Tobias and I'm here today to speak in favor of L.D. 1818. I am a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1253 and a resident of Monroe.

I've been working as an apprentice electrician since 2019 and I'm nearly ready to get my journeyman's license. In that time, I've done a variety of work. One thing that I've done very little of is new industrial work. In Maine, we generally do industrial work on old industry. Paper mills built a century ago come to mind. But now we're looking at a totally new industry, not just for Maine, but for the US! Floating offshore wind isn't being done, but it's about to happen and we need to ensure that it happens the right way.

When any construction worker gets to a new jobsite she or he begins putting themselves out of a job from day one. It's the nature of the work. The faster and more efficient we are, the sooner the job will end. If there isn't more work to do then we take a lay-off. The size and scale of offshore wind will put a lot of people to work for a long, long time. To me this means that I use my daycare slot every week. Because if you have kids, you know that whether or not you use the slot you still have to pay for it if you want to keep it. For me this means that I'd have health insurance for me and my 3 kids at all times, not just when the work picture is good.

And to get that kind of long term job security doing something that actually gives me hope for my kids future the way offshore wind does is a huge bonus. Maine has put up a lot of solar, but as my husband says, "Everybody wants electricity, but no one wants to see it being generated". We're already seeing pushback to solar farms, and no one wants to distract from the beauty Maine has to offer. Offshore wind will help us transition to clean energy and for nearly all Mainers, they'll never see a turbine creating the electricity that will power their cars, their heat, their ovens, and the rest of their lives.

And in Maine, people spend money where they make it. If we make the jobs at this port the best jobs they can be, it will benefit grocery stores, restaurants, roofers, realtors, car dealerships, and anyone else who is part of the local economy. It won't just be the construction workers who benefit. Everyone will win.

To finish up, I've made a construction career out of piecing things together: I've pieced together jobs from one to the next, I've pieced together the work of electricians from decades ago to get machines running again, and now I have the chance to do brand new work and gain skills I'll carry throughout my career. I have the opportunity to create something new for me, for Maine, and for all of our families.

Thanks for listening, and please support LD 1818.