

January 23, 2024

Good afternoon,

My name is Peter Wilson and I am here to offer my insight into LD2133 and its potential repercussions. I started in the Electrical trade in 1981 as a high school student and completed an accredited 2-year program in Electricity. I then attended and graduated from SMV TI with an AAS in Industrial Electricity. I went directly into the workforce in construction but settled as an Industrial Electrician in the paper industry. This industry was so specialized that I had to complete an 8,000-hour apprenticeship program as a condition of employment. This 4-year experience ended up being my most thorough and complete training in this trade. I have worked in a vast spectrum of areas such as 4-20millivolt I/A control systems, Power generation (Biomass as well as Hydro), and I worked on a utility crew during the ice storm of 1998. I was laid off from this position shortly afterward and went back to college to complete a BS degree. I have been a licensed Master Electrician since 1989.

During my time in industry, I participated in the LEP program and got my start in education as an instructor in the apprenticeship program there. I instructed both full-time and adjunct for the Community College system and spent 21 years teaching Electricity at the secondary level, leaving this position in 2022. I continue to teach Electrical Safety classes for businesses throughout the State and region.

The JIT license was introduced in the early 1980's as an incentive to bolster enrollment in the VTI training programs and to validate the 2 years of full time, specialized training that an individual spent learning the foundations of the trade. College graduates that meet these requirements are allowed to take the Journeyman exam upon completion and need to show 2,000 hours of licensed, supervised experience to receive the license. The JIT allows an individual to work unsupervised in all aspects of the electrical trade. They are not allowed to supervise an Apprentice or Helper. Apprentices are currently allowed to take the exam and qualify for this license after 6,000 hours of experience and 576 hours of education. This bill would allow graduates of a high school electrical program to receive the JIT after 1,000 hours of experience in the trade.

In the past few years, the secondary programs have received; a no cost Helper license for their students, a 2 to 1 supervision ratio, and 1,000 hours of work experience credit on top of the 576 classroom hours for the Journeyman license. There are 2 approved curriculums taught in Maine; NAHB and NCCER. The NAHB program is actually called "House Wiring" and students in the NCCER curriculum barely get through level 2 of the 4-level training program. Graduates of the secondary programs get credit for 576 classroom hours consisting of Electricity I (DC theory), Electricity II (AC theory), Math I, Controls I (residential switching), and 351 hours of technical electives. Graduates of Post secondary programs as well as Apprenticeship programs receive credit for Electricity I (DC theory), Electricity II (AC theory), Electronics I, Math I, Controls I, Controls II, Motors, Blueprint Reading/Drafting, and Transformers. As you can see, these are much more academically rigorous programs. Most of the secondary programs instruct residential applications and I question how much AC theory is being instructed at this level.

The industry is becoming much more technical even at the residential level with the expansion of AFCI and GFCI applications, surge protection, photovoltaic systems, electric vehicle chargers, automatic standby generators, life safety and security systems and whole house automation.

Maine has reciprocity agreements with a number of States and has recently implemented the licensure by endorsement process to streamline the process for someone to attain licensure when coming to Maine from another State that has substantially equivalent licensing requirements.

As a former instructor at the high school level, I can personally attest to the requirements of these programs. There is a lot of pressure to provide State or Industry credentials to the graduates with little oversight into how well the programs are meeting current requirements. There are so many more tasks demanded of these instructors and programs that are not directly related to the electrical curriculum such as the students' emotional well-being, food insecurity issues, diversity and equity, language barriers, and remote learning issues, just to name a few. I fully support that these are all valid concerns but all of this takes instructional time away from the classroom.

The sole purpose of a regulatory board and licensing is to protect the public's safety. So I feel that LD 2133 should not be supported as presented based on the intended outcome of putting a very inexperienced practitioner out to work unsupervised in the Electrical Industry, potentially putting themselves and the public at risk.

Thank you for all of the important work that you do!

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