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RE: LD 2133 - H.P. 1357 Sec. 3. 32 MRSA 1202-B, sub-3, B

To whom it may concern,

After reviewing this bill and seeking counsel from my Advisory Board, I am not able to endorse it. While its intentions are meant for good, and I appreciate someone speaking up for CTE students and pathways for their future, I believe this bill misses the mark on the training required to become a JIT. My Advisory Board consists of 4 owners of Electrical Contracting companies, Carmel Electric, Hampden Electric, Gifford Electric, and Duffy's Electric, which together have employed hundreds of electricians. I was able to contact three of them, and all three were not in favor of this proposed bill. I also have the IBEW Local Union training director on my board, and after a conversation with him, they are not in favor of this bill. I was also in contact with Cianbro's Training Director, who is on my board, and they are not in favor. I also contacted a former associate of mine who is the project manager for ABM Mechanical's electrical division, and they are also not in favor. In short, one evening of phone calls to large employers in this region of the state resulted in no one being in favor of this bill. I have consistently believed that CTE students should have the ability to become a JIT in their pathway to becoming a Journeyman, but my benchmark starts at 4000 hrs., and some industry people I have talked to seem to be more comfortable with 5000 hrs.

I would like to share some reasons for the opposition to this bill:

- **Safety:** The NFPA 70 Electrical Code is written by the National Fire Protection Agency for a reason: electrical fires are easy to create when installations are not done in a workmanlike manner. The Code is not an installation guide but a minimum standard to protect people and property from electrical hazards. Being able to pass a Journeyman Code exam is an Academic accomplishment, and that is not enough to become a qualified electrician who can install electrical equipment safely. Arc flashes in a main distribution panel can be a deadly consequence of improper training, and a six-month helper would not be allowed in a live MDP, let alone working in one alone, but this bill would allow that. Electrocutation to personnel who are using the finished product of an electrical installation can lead to death because it takes less than 100 milliamps to stop a person's heart. To put that into perspective, a typical 12-watt LED bulb using 120 volts draws 100 milliamps! Lastly, the long-term effects of an improper installation can be found years later when a termination finally fails and a fire ensues. These types of installs are typical of a training helper, and that is why oversight is required for a minimum of 4,000 hours, which is currently the shortest pathway to becoming a Journeyman.
- **Training:** Passing an Exam is one step in the process of becoming a licensed electrician. Training a helper to be prepared for the plethora of installations that an electrician is licensed to perform takes more than the current 4000 hrs. required by college graduates, but at least those students have passed college courses in advanced electrical disciplines. It is unwise to think of an electrician as simply wiring homes or doing lighting upgrades. Our licenses allow us to work on Hospitals, Industrial facilities, and any retail/commercial building in the state of Maine. A six-month helper would have no clue about these installations but would be allowed by the State of Maine to legally work in any of those locations.

- **Devaluing Our License:** We currently have high standards in relation to other states when it comes to reciprocity agreements. When other states realize that we have lowered our standards to the level that an 18 yr. old with 1000 hrs. of on-the-job training could be licensed to work on their own, the ramifications could be tragic.
- **Costs:** When a person receives a Journeyman license, the immediate next step is an increase in wages. The reasons for a wage increase are that the person is now more valuable to the employer because they have proven their work over 4000 hrs., have completed the state-required courses at a community college, passed the Journeyman exam, and can now work alone, and have a helper work under their license. Very little of the pay increase is due to the person being significantly qualified to run jobs on their own; in fact, the people on my advisory board agree that another 4,000 hours are usually needed before a Journeyman has seen enough situations to be truly self-sufficient. On the other hand, a company that wants a "paper" license, like a Solar Installer, will pay the bills proposed JIT more money than they are worth, and that will continue to drive up prices in the Electrical industry as it responds to the compensation for higher wage increases. Higher costs are proven to be a deterrent to growth in the private sector, and they contribute to artificially elevating the value of labor.
- **Expectations:** A student entering the electrical trade has visions of what they think their job will be and the money they will make. When they quickly realize that the JIT brings high expectations from their employer to match the money they are asking for, many will become overwhelmed and discouraged due to the fact they are incapable of performing basic installs without assistance. Being pushed into a situation you are not prepared for as an electrician leads to safety hazards, dangerous installations, costly mistakes, and eventually, the feeling that the person doesn't have what it takes to be an electrician, and they leave the trade completely.

Lastly, as a CTE Electrical Instructor for Region 4-UTC, and over the past six years, I have worked very hard to create a program that is academically rigorous and introduces my students to the foundational principles needed to be highly prepared Electrician Helpers. I know that my students lack real-world experience, and even though I do my best to prepare them, I personally would never consider even the best of them worthy of a JIT license in any situation less than 4000 hrs. My career path started like many before and many after, as a helper during the day while taking evening courses at EMCC. I have over 25 years of experience as an electrician, and I have run many types of residential, commercial, and retail-based jobs, along with occasionally working on Industrial, Wind, and Solar projects. Working one day installing a receptacle circuit in someone's home and the next day working at GE Power installing power for a bank of exhaust fans is the type of experience that makes being an Electrician awesome but, at the same time, incredibly difficult and demanding. I would not have been remotely ready to become a JIT after six months.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

Clint Jackson  
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Master Electrician

