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LD 1075

I am a proud Mainer. My family has been here for 6 generations. I am also an incredibly hard worker. I credit this to being born and raised in Maine. Everytime I call my Dad to update him about my career he says, "Well, I'm not surprised. You've got that Maine work ethic."

I am now 33 years old and I'm at that stage in life where I am asking myself "Where do I want to settle down?", "Where do I want to start a family?". The answer is Maine. The answer has always been Maine, but there was a problem. You see, I am a Casting Director. I regularly work casting extras for big Movies and TV shows. Working full time in the Film and Television industry; I didn't think it would be possible to sustain a life and career here in Maine. But then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. After the initial work stoppage, producers would call and tell me; "When things start back up; We want to hire you and your team, but you will all be deemed 'non-essential personnel' and you will work from home."

So, I had three TV series, about a year's worth of work, lined up where I could work from home! I said; "I'm moving back to Maine before anyone can tell me I can't!" I found a winter rental at Higgins Beach, packed up my apartment, and finally came home. I cast Hulu's DOPESICK, Apple TV's SWAGGER, and a Walking dead spin off series called: The World Beyond. All from my home office overlooking the water, here in Maine. What a dream.

Where was I living before moving back home? You may be thinking LA or New York? No. Actually, I was living in Richmond, Virginia. Most people don't know that Virginia has a film industry, but they do. They have a competitive tax incentive program, a passionate film office, working closely with the Virginia Tourism office to capitalize on the economic opportunity when films come to shoot in Virginia.

My first time on set I was amazed that 90% of the crew were local Virginia residents who worked full time in the film industry and *lived* in Virginia. These crew members were; carpenters, painters, van drivers, truck drivers, electricians, accountants. They worked in departments like props, set-decoration, sound, camera, hair, make-up, wardrobe, and so many more. I couldn't believe that I could have a rich and sustained career in the film industry and NOT have to live in New York or LA. I loved my time working in Virginia, but it wasn't home.

I am invested in staying in Maine, but now I cannot always work from home, and I am regularly traveling out of state, usually to Massachusetts or Rhode Island. Since moving back I have met other film professionals who live here and have to travel for work. We would all love to be able to work in our home state, spend more time with our families and sleep in our own beds.

I remember while I was growing up in Maine, I thought I needed to leave if I wanted to pursue a career in the arts; theater or film, but the film industry has changed. Films are no longer shooting in only NY or LA. The productions go where the tax incentives are, and when Maine approves tax incentives, the films will come. When they come, they will bring good paying, exciting jobs and numerous economic growth for our beautiful state. They will hire local people and they will spend money at our hotels, restaurants and businesses. I have seen the exponential economic growth films have brought to other states and I hope Maine can use this opportunity to its advantage.

As a film industry professional and as a Mainer; I am in full support of LD 1075.

Sincerely,
Kendall Cooper

Kendall Cooper Casting
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Kendall Cooper of Portland, ME - Casting Director / Owner "Kendall Cooper Casting"
Father: Craig Cooper of Cape Elizabeth, ME - Contractor / Owner "Rainbow Construction"
Grandfather: Woodrow Cooper of Portland, ME - Engineer at Bath Iron Works
Great-Grandfather: Leonard Cooper of Whitefeild, ME - Farmer