

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Chris Hodgdon, I live in Kennebunk, I am the Assistant Business Manager for International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2327 based here in Augusta. I am here in support of the Amendment to LD 373. Prior to my role on staff with the local, I had 26 years experience working in the field as a Splice Service Technician for Consolidated Communications. Some of my duties as a technician included the installation and maintenance of voice and data services as well as splicing telecommunication cables both in the air and in underground manhole systems.

I have been fortunate enough to work under a labor agreement that provides a heavy focus on safety in the workplace through hands-on training of safe working practices, computer-based learning modules and union appointed safety coaches. I've also sat on the joint union/company safety committee which consists of safety coaches, management, and a representative from each garage across the state. The meetings provide an environment to identify and discuss safety issues in the field and within company practices and to work through solutions in a collaborative fashion.

Nothing delays a project faster than an accident or tragedy on the job, yet nothing is more preventable. Unfortunately on January 17, 2023, a 24 year old non-union subcontractor from Brooklyn, NY by the name of Danila Belov was killed while working on a broadband fiber expansion project in the town of Rangeley. Mr. Belov was riding in the bucket of the vehicle as it was being driven down the street when the bucket came in contact with wires running from pole to pole. The vehicle continued to move increasing the tension on the bucket until eventually Mr. Belov was catapulted from the bucket and pronounced dead at the scene.

This practice goes against one of the basic rules of working aloft that is taught in the field, yet we still receive footage that this practice occurs among subcontractors. What causes them to work in this unsafe manner? Is it a lack of training with safe working practices? Our top priority in IBEW 2327 is that all our members go home to their families every night. I believe people working in Maine should have the same safety opportunity that my work labor agreement demands.

Thank you for your time and please vote Ought to Pass as Amended on LD 373.