



**Testimony of Larry Grondin  
in Opposition to LD 1983**

**"An Act to Establish the Maine Buy American and Build Maine Act"**

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Larry Grondin. I am a resident of Scarborough and the President of R.J. Grondin & Sons, a third-generation earth excavation company located in Cumberland County. I am here today on behalf of the Associated Builders and Contractors of Maine. ABC Maine represents nearly 200 construction and related businesses in Maine and are part of the 23,000-member strong national organization. On behalf of our Association, we are speaking in opposition of LD 1983.

ABC Maine supports the underlying tenants of the bill. Buying American made products to build Maine projects is a laudable goal and one that our member companies strive for, when and if possible. These tenants remain at the core of why we are unwavering in our opposition to policies like project labor agreements that favor, knowingly or unknowingly, out of state workers over Maine workers. American workers that live in Maine are at the core of what makes our companies successful. It's why we are preeminent defenders of the merit shop philosophy in the construction industry - nondiscrimination due to labor affiliation and the awarding of construction contracts through open, competitive bidding based on safety, quality, and value.

We appreciate the changes, and particularly the exemptions of the Maine DOT and MTA, made to this bill. There are differences when you compare this version to ones presented in previous Legislatures. However, we remain opposed. The provisions of this law would still apply to a large amount of state projects even when exempting transportation projects. We believe passing and implementing this law will lead to higher costs for state projects, increased bureaucratic red tape, and longer build times.

As we saw during the pandemic, our supply chains are delicate and can be disrupted quicker than we'd all like. The construction industry is still suffering shock waves from COVID, but we're adapting and doing everything we can to move things back to normal. However, there are some things that aren't changing. The cost of materials continues to rise. In fact, on average, they are over 35% higher than they were at the beginning of the pandemic.

Our shared pandemic experience should be a lesson learned in restricting supply, let alone bureaucratically restricting supply. By requiring contractors to exhaust suppliers and manufacturers in the United States before finding a required material elsewhere takes time. In construction and in life, time means money. Ultimately this additional cost will fall on the backs of the taxpayer. As prices rise for public projects, there will be fewer of them completed. We believe this will be the case if LD 1983 is enacted.

While we understand there are emergency provisions and waivers built into the law we must take into account that industry moves quicker than government. Requiring contractors to obtain a waiver will take time and effort that could be better spent delivering a quality product quicker, cheaper, and hopefully ahead of schedule.

The BABM requirements are largely based on the Buy America provisions required by the federal government for federally funded projects. Since the addition of steel and iron to the BABA requirements, there has been a variety of waivers granted to contractors working on projects for many federal departments including the US Department of Transportation and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Both departments cited the need to study and gather information on the domestic sourcing capacity to implement the new standards. We believe that this committee should learn from the experience of these federal departments and not implement policies that will, as evidenced, result in the policy not being followed due to lack of information and market availability right out of the gate.

ABC Maine and ABC National support strategies to expand domestic jobs and manufacturing and capture economic benefits within Maine and America. However, whatever policies we pursue need to be balanced against increased materials and construction costs and needless delays of infrastructure projects. We believe LD 1983 does not strike that balance. We ask the committee to vote ought not to pass on this bill.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.