

Elyse Bronson
IBEW Local 1837
LD 187

Testimony of Elyse Bronson, Steward, IBEW Local 1837, In Opposition to LD 187 –
“An Act to Prohibit Labor Organizations from Imposing Mandatory Service Fees on
Nonmembers”

February 12, 2025

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and distinguished members of the Labor
Committee,

My name is Elyse Bronson, and I proudly wear many hats. I’m a union steward for
the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1837, former member of
the
Communications Workers of America Local 1400, customer service trainer, Girl
Scout
troop leader, someone with chronic illnesses, and lifelong Mainer. No matter which
hat
I’m wearing, I have concerns about the implications of LD 187.

In my 15 years as a union member, I have experienced the array of benefits unions
offer. Unions help create countless good paying jobs with room for advancement,
providing safety and stability for members, regardless of the economic climate. I’ve
seen
my own unions fight for hard-earned retirement benefits, which are crucial when your
state

has the oldest population in the country. From October 2014 to February 2015, CWA
Local 1400’s strike fund provided me with income so I could still make ends meet
while we fought to keep essential jobs in Northern New England. Unions foster
community in the workplace, improving the mental well-being of their members.

Both IBEW and CWA count public utilities employees among their members. My
fellow members and I take pride in providing safe, reliable services. The unions who
support us are critical to making this happen. They protect safe working conditions,
safe
staffing, and ethical work environments. When a large group of workers shares this
focus,
the customers and the company reap the benefits.

The impacts of reliable wages and benefits go beyond the workplace and into our
economy and communities. For example, employees who don’t need to work multiple
jobs have the time to give back to their communities. In my case this involves
hundreds of
volunteer hours with Girl Scouts each year. Working in solidarity to make the world a
better place is a value both unions and the Girl Scouts hold dear.

As someone with a rare genetic syndrome, I know how easy it is to accrue
overwhelming medical debt. Because I’m a union member, I know my job is secure, I
have
strong healthcare to mitigate costs, I can seek treatments that improve my quality of
life,
and afford daily expenses. Sadly, doing this is a luxury for many. Unions work to
raise
these standards in hopes experiences like mine can become the norm.

Protecting the stability and dignity of workers cannot be done with collective action
alone. There is a financial cost to these benefits, too. Mainers are known for being
helpers, sharing the load whenever possible. Sharing the cost of better workplaces
through union dues aligns with our state’s core values. This is why it’s imperative you
vote
“Ought Not to Pass” on LD 187 and protect the ability of Maine unions to protect

Maine
workers. Thank you for your time and consideration.
Respectfully submitted,
Elyse Bronson
Steward, IBEW Local 1837