



LOCAL S/6, INDUSTRIAL UNION of MARINE & SHIPBUILDING WORKERS OF AMERICA / I.A.M.A.W.

722 Washington Street, Bath, Maine 04530 207-443-5566 207-442-9750 (fax)



February 11, 2025

****Testimony on the Negative Effects of Right-to-Work Laws** *Delivered by Chris Williams, President of Local S6***

Good morning, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Members of the Labor Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Chris Williams, and I serve as the president of Local S6, representing 4400 hardworking Shipbuilders at BIW.

I am here to express my deep concerns about the harmful impact of so-called 'right-to-work' laws on workers, unions, and the broader economy. Right-to-work laws are often misleading and framed as a benefit to workers, but in reality, they are designed to weaken unions and undermine the collective power of working people. These laws allow employees to opt out of paying union dues while still receiving the benefits of union representation—benefits like fair wages, safer working conditions, and access to healthcare and retirement plans. This creates a 'free rider' problem, where some workers enjoy the fruits of union advocacy without contributing to the costs of maintaining that representation. The consequences of right-to-work laws are devastating. By draining unions of the resources needed to effectively negotiate and advocate for workers, these laws erode the ability of unions to secure fair contracts and protect workers' rights. Over time, this leads to lower wages, reduced benefits, and diminished workplace protections. Studies consistently show that workers in right-to-work states earn significantly less—on average, 3.1% less—than their counterparts in states without such laws. This wage suppression disproportionately harms middle- and working-class families, exacerbating income inequality and stifling economic mobility. Furthermore, right-to-work laws undermine the sense of solidarity that is the foundation of the labor movement. Unions thrive on the principle that we are stronger together, but these laws sow division by pitting workers against one another and creating an environment where collective action is harder to sustain. This not only weakens unions but also diminishes their ability to advocate for policies that benefit all workers, such as paid leave, affordable healthcare, and fair scheduling practices. The impact of right-to-work laws extends beyond union members. When unions are weakened, the entire community suffers. Unions have historically been a driving force behind the creation of the middle class, and their decline contributes to stagnant wages and growing economic inequality. Strong unions benefit everyone by setting higher standards for wages and working conditions, which non-union employers often match to remain competitive.

In conclusion, right-to-work laws are not about protecting workers' rights—they are about dismantling the power of workers to collectively bargain and advocate for a fair share of the wealth they help create. These laws harm workers, weaken communities, and undermine the principles of fairness and equity that our labor movement has fought for over generations. I urge you to consider the long-term consequences of these laws and to stand with working people by opposing right-to-work legislation. Together, we can build an economy that works for everyone, not just the wealthy few. For these reasons, I urge the committee to vote not to pass LD 187.

Thank you.