

Testimony of Beau Libby, UA Local 716, in support of LD 946, "Resolve, to Increase Access to Energy Efficiency Programs by Low-income and Moderate-income Residents"

Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Beau Libby and I'm here today to speak in support of LD 946.

I have been a member of the United Association and Local 716 Plumbers, Pipefitters & HVAC Technicians Union since 1997. I successfully completed a five-year, 10,000-hour registered apprenticeship program and have worked as a pipe welder, pipefitter or a HVAC tech/installer until approximately 2018.

Currently, I serve on the Maine State Fuel Board and hold several licenses, including a master oil for 15 gal and under, a JM for 15 gals and over, a gas license with large endorsement, OSHA 30, EP608, among other trade certifications. For the past seven years, I have been employed as a union organizer. A significant portion of my role involves engaging with non-union workers at their job sites, in their work vans, during lunch breaks, while they refuel their vehicles, even on rooftops. I will also visit with many of the companies employing these workers and discuss the opportunities and resources available for their businesses, and their employees.

While doing my job, I have heard numerous accounts from workers and contractors regarding poor quality workmanship going on in this industry. A few described it as the wild wild west, which refers to the contractors who lack the necessary training, state licenses and/or certifications to ensure proper installation. Some of these contractors will knowingly employ unlicensed and untrained workers, some even fail to have the proper tools and equipment needed for a proper installation. These failures do result in subpar work and frequent callbacks leaving low & moderate-income Mainers to incur additional costs and possibly be left with units requiring repair or not working. These poor-quality practices can and will void or shorten the manufacturer's warranty.

It's already challenging enough for a reputable and compliant company to compete in today's market, but it becomes nearly impossible against unscrupulous contractors who knowingly, disregard established guidelines from the manufacturer and state laws that are set to ensure a proper and safe installation. This keeps most good and honest companies from bidding on projects altogether, deeming it a waste of time, money and resources.

By incorporating language such as a registered apprenticeship program, prevailing wages, training and safety, we can ensure that Maine's low income & moderate customers will receive the highest quality workmanship available. This will also ensure customers receive the best possible warranties thru the manufacturers, based on a proper installation by a trained licensed/or certified technician. This is also the best way to attract and retain our workforce.

This benefits all Maine workers by also making sure they are receiving a livable wage and benefits. It will prevent out of state contractors who love to 1099 their workers, which will always undercut a compliant contractor trying to do the right thing.

My most significant takeaway from my experiences as an organizer is that it does not matter whether one is a union, or a non-union worker. All honest, hard-working people who rise each day and go to work and grind for something better for themselves or their family, deserve to be treated fairly and with dignity, along with a livable wage including benefits. I believe this bill will play a vital role to ensuring that these principles and standards are upheld.

A rising tide raises all boats.