

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

My name is Hayley Lawrence, and I am an apprentice with Laborers Local 327. I am here to testify today in support of LD 1117 act "Act to strengthen Maine's Workforce through Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Programs".

The Union Construction Academy pre-apprenticeship absolutely changed my life for the better, and I mean that in no exaggerating way. When I did my interview for the program, I did it from my car, because at the time I was living in my car. The day I started the Union Construction Academy and the whole time that I was in the pre-apprenticeship I was in fact living in my car. All the instructors pushed me to believe in myself, go the extra mile and be the best version of myself that I didn't even know I had within myself.

The Monday after we graduated I started working with a construction company, exactly one month after my first day on the job I signed a lease for my very own first apartment. That is not something I ever thought that I would do. And I never would've gotten to that point in my life without this program. All of the skills I learned, knowledge I gained and connections that I made have brought me to where I am today, working in a successful life changing career, hence why I cannot be there in person today. Following the Union Construction Academy, I went to work for 7 months and then continued my journey to the New England Laborers Training Academy which I in fact just graduated from last Friday.

In conclusion, when I say that pre-apprenticeship changed my life for the better I mean that wholeheartedly. I never once in my life thought that I'd be where I am today, and again that is all thanks to the Union Construction Academy. The people in that program believed in me, gave me hope and a second chance at life. I hope you will support LD 1117 to support funding for pre-apprenticeship and help other Mainers get these life-changing opportunities.