

## **Testimony of Jason J. Shedlock**

*in support of*

### **LD 1117: An Act to Strengthen Maine's Workforce Through Certified Preapprenticeship Training Programs**

Chairs Tipping, Roeder and members of the Committee on Labor. I am Jason J. Shedlock, I live in Portland, and I am the President of Maine Building Trades Unions and Regional Organizer and Secretary-Treasurer for Local 327 of the Laborers' International Union. I also serve as the President of the Southern Maine Labor Council and the Chair of the Board of Trustees for the Maine AFL-CIO. I am a gubernatorial appointee to both the Maine State Workforce Board and the Maine Apprenticeship Council, where on the latter, I serve as the Chair. And while I am not here in those official capacities, I do hope that by mentioning these roles, I can be seen as a resource to the committee.

I am here, however, to bring the voices of the thousands of working Mainers I have been elected to represent and state that I am in favor of LD 1117, and appreciate Representative Webb's willingness to champion this critical and timely piece of legislation.

I would be pleased to get into the nuance of the bill, and perhaps we can do that during questions. During my three minutes, I would like to offer the Committee to consider a few general and overarching factors when it comes to our workforce and how we can address Maine's needs.

We often hear about a workforce shortage in a number of industries, with construction always ranking near the top. And while I still wonder why it is that business owners use their precious time to lament that shortage, rather than making a phone call to any one or multiple of the 20 affiliated labor unions to help them with their worker power needs. My cell phone number is 207-317-1447. I am happy to work with anyone personally to help them meet those needs, and make referrals to those labor unions as appropriate.

What this legislation does is: support a proven pre-apprenticeship model to expand our workforce, ensure that our workforce reflects the communities where those workers live, and exhibit prudent fiscal stewardship of the taxpayer dollar by investing those dollars into programs that allow for workers to make a wage that does not qualify them for further taxpayer assistance and have access to employer-paid healthcare, not Mainecare.

I close with this: "No" is not a workforce strategy. "No" is not an economic development strategy. I challenge those in this body, in the legislature, and in the executive branch to offer up their ideas to achieve these goals I referenced above. And while I am disappointed in the inability of the executive branch to offer bold solutions with regard to pre apprenticeship, I am not surprised as it has been the union movement that has been responsible for establishing the structure of and offering ways to grow the preapprenticeship model. I know because I was there, my members have been there, many in this room have been there, speaking up for working Mainers from diverse and massively underrepresented populations - literally building the table, let alone ensuring they have a seat there. That's why I appreciate Representative Webb's common sense, proven, measurable and community-building approach with this piece of legislation. I urge you to both support LD 1117, as well as offer your additional ideas and strategies to responsibly, equitably, and effectively build and rebuild Maine. Thank you.