



MAINE AFL-CIO

A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers

21 Gabriel Drive, Augusta, Maine 04330

Tel. (207) 622-9675

www.maineaflcio.org



President

Cynthia Phinney

Cynthia@maineaflcio.org

Vice President

Grant Provost

GProvost@iwlocal7.org

Secretary-Treasurer

Doug Born

Dougial14@gmail.com

Good afternoon, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Sam Boss and I am the Apprenticeship and Workforce Director at the Maine AFL-CIO, which represents 40,000 working people and retirees in Maine. I am here to testify in support of LD 1117, an "Act to strengthen Maine's Workforce through Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Programs".

In my role as Apprenticeship Director at the AFL-CIO, I coordinate our Union Construction Academy pre-apprenticeship program, an intensive five-week pre-apprenticeship that prepares graduates for careers in building, construction, and manufacturing. For those who may be less familiar with pre-apprenticeship, programs like the Union Construction Academy prepare graduates to thrive in registered apprenticeships, where they earn good wages while learning lucrative skills with the guidance of experienced journeymen. During our program, participants attend daily classes and earn industry-recognized credentials such as OSHA-10 and First-Aid/CPR. They gain hands-on skills from instructors who teach them a range of hands-on skills, from mixing and pouring concrete and hanging drywall to wiring outlets and welding. Through all of their hands-on work, our participants build skills and confidence in construction math and blueprint reading.

Our pre-apprentices also learn about a range of careers by meeting with representatives from different trades – laborers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, ironworkers, elevator constructors, ship and submarine builders, and many more. Pre-apprentices may come into our program wanting to do one thing, but then find that their skills, interests, and life situations are better suited to a different trade, which helps to ensure that they will stay on the job when they enter apprenticeship. Similarly, our pre-apprentices learn professional skills that help them to succeed, from showing up early and making a good impression during an interview, to prioritizing safety and managing finances. Once our pre-apprentices graduate, we help them to apply directly to apprenticeships or other careers in the trades. We are often able to get them out to work right away in critical positions where they're helping to improve our infrastructure, build up our housing stock, improve our supply of clean energy, and upgrade our Navy's fleet of submarines and warships.



MAINE AFL-CIO
A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers
21 Gabriel Drive, Augusta, Maine 04330
Tel. (207) 622-9675
www.maineaflcio.org



President
Cynthia Phinney
Cynthia@maineaflcio.org

Vice President
Grant Provost
GProvost@iwlocal7.org

Secretary-Treasurer
Doug Born
Dougia114@gmail.com

By providing a direct pathway into the workforce for folks who haven't had opportunities to explore opportunities in the trades in the past, our pre-apprenticeship is a great asset to employers that are struggling to fill critical positions. Just as importantly, pre-apprenticeship has proved to be life changing for our graduates. To give you a few examples, one of our recent graduates had been couch surfing and living in her car after spending years struggling in low-wage jobs in southern Maine. Her father and brothers had all worked as welders, but it was not an option she was ever encouraged to pursue. After completing our month-long training, she is working as a welder with Cives Steel, earning good wages and benefits, and helping to revitalize a workforce with many employees who are approaching retirement. Another young man who came through our program is hard of hearing. Even though he had been a top student in his high school's technical program, he had not received job offers after going through the interview process with several employers. After he excelled in our program, we helped to connect him with folks at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard who were able to recognize his talent and support his needs. He's been thriving there with the Boilermakers for over a year.

In short, pre-apprenticeship has proven to be a highly effective pathway into high-wage, in demand positions for working class Mainers from a wide range of backgrounds. Funding from LD 1117 will allow our program and other pre-apprenticeships to grow and provide outstanding opportunities for working-class Mainers, while addressing critical workforce shortages around the state. I urge you to support this bill.