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*Testimony of Representative Kilton Webb introducing*  
**LD 1117, An Act to Strengthen Maine's Workforce Through Certified  
Preapprenticeship Training Programs**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor*

Good afternoon, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Labor Committee. My name is Kilton Webb, and I represent House District 98, which includes Durham, Pownal, and parts of Bowdoin, Lisbon and Topsham. Additionally, I am the director of membership development for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 567. I am honored to present **LD 1117, An Act to Strengthen Maine's Workforce Through Certified Preapprenticeship Training Programs**.

When I was door knocking last year through the long summer and into late fall, I had hundreds and hundreds of conversations with my neighbors and members of my community. We talked about the issues you would expect: property taxes, cost of living, power reliability, education and so on. The one issue I was happy to continuously put on people's radar that I care deeply about was the importance of the trades.

Once I would bring up the fact that I am an electrician, I would see their eyes light up. "Oh you're an electrician? Are you busy right now? I have this light I want to replace. I have this receptacle I want moved." And I would have to tell them, I'm already pretty busy with my own projects I have lined up. It's a story that we hear time and time again. I can't find a plumber, an electrician, carpenter, roofer – you name it. There simply aren't enough people in the trades to go around anymore and to me, that is a result of us pressuring kids to go the college route as the default option for the past thirty years.

I was one of those kids who was sold the dream of college. I got halfway through and realized that this simply was not for me. I made the tough decision to drop out and try something different in life. Sure, I may not have gotten that shiny piece of paper hard earned after those four years, but at least I didn't have as much student loan debt. I knew I

wanted to work with my hands, so I worked as general maintenance being a jack-of-all trades deciding which one I wanted to master. I settled on becoming an electrician when I learned about how horrifying the age demographics were. In 2017, the average age of an electrician was 55 years old. With some simple math, I realized that if it takes about four years to get your license, by the time I get mine, a good chunk of the electricians in the state would be retiring. Looking back, it is amazing how well that prediction has played out. Electricians and tradespeople in general are aging in our state.

When it was time to get my electrical education there were a few paths that I could take, and I ultimately decided to go the registered apprenticeship route. To me and many other Mainers, this educational approach makes the most sense. It is a perfect mix of on-the-job, hands-on training mixed with classroom necessities like the code and electrical theory.

Preapprenticeships and apprenticeships are a key method for us to get more people into the trades. The best way for you to learn a trade is by going out day after day and working beside somebody who has decades of experience doing that work. You pair those hands-on lessons with the theory and code learned in the classroom and it creates a beautiful feedback loop. In class, you talk about what you were working on and learned there. In the field, you bring those finer technical points to inform your work. I believe in these programs because they work and they help Mainers, like myself, get to work.

I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1117, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

## Rep. Kilton Webb Sponsor's Amendment to LD 1117 In Advance of Public Hearing

Sponsor's amendment changes included in red below

### An Act to Strengthen Maine's Workforce Through Certified Preapprenticeship Training Programs

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

**Sec. 1. 26 MRSA §3213, sub-§6**, as enacted by PL 2021, c. 705, §12, is amended to read:

**6. Funding.** As funds are available, the Maine Apprenticeship Program, through the department and in consultation with the Maine Apprenticeship Council, shall make available grants to support certified preapprenticeship training programs under this section. A certified preapprenticeship training program shall use the grants to provide meaningful support and stipends to facilitate enrollment and participation in the program. Support may include funding for child care, transportation, training materials, membership fees and costs, tools and personal protective equipment and reimbursement of other expenses that may be incurred by ~~a student~~ an individual to facilitate the ~~student's~~ individual's attendance and participation in the certified preapprenticeship training program; funding for assistance to address obstacles to and to identify and access services necessary for successful participation in the certified preapprenticeship training program; and funding for facilitating an individual's readiness to commence on-the-job learning in a registered apprenticeship program. Stipends may include cash payments. In allocating grants among certified preapprenticeship training programs, the Maine Apprenticeship Program shall ~~give priority to programs that have demonstrated successful enrollment of students from historically marginalized communities~~. allocate at least 51% of total grant funding to support certified preapprenticeship training programs that have:

A. Demonstrated successful engagement and enrollment of and completion by individuals from historically marginalized communities and successful placement and enrollment of and completion by individuals from historically marginalized communities in registered apprenticeship programs;

B. Consistently placed individuals in registered apprenticeship programs that result in a total package value of no less than \$35 per hour upon graduation from the registered apprenticeship program, based on Maine Apprenticeship Program evaluations as required pursuant to section 3204, subsection 2. On January 15, 2026 and each January 15th thereafter, the minimum total package value amount under this paragraph must be increased by the increase, if any, in the cost of living. The increase in the cost of living is measured by the percentage increase, if any, as of August of the previous year over the level as of August of the year preceding that year in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers, CPI-W, for the Northeast Region, or its successor index, as published by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics or its successor agency, with the amount of the minimum total package value increase rounded to the nearest multiple of 5¢; and

C. Demonstrated the provision of strong, comprehensive support services essential to ensure success.

132nd Maine Legislature  
An Act to Strengthen Maine's Workforce Through Certified Preapprenticeship Training Programs  
L.D. 1117

Certified preapprenticeship training programs that cannot produce proof that graduates are employed in the field of their preapprenticeship after a period of 6 months following successful completion of their certified preapprenticeship training program or are represented by a labor organization are ineligible for grants under this subsection.

Funding for grants to support preapprenticeship training programs must be awarded to certified preapprenticeship training programs with strong direct entry links with registered apprenticeship programs through a competitive process administered by the department through the Maine Apprenticeship Program and to certified preapprenticeship training programs that train individuals for priority sectors for high-wage, in-demand jobs.

Funding for grants to support certified preapprenticeship training programs may also be used for program development, support and staffing for grantees.

**Sec. 3. Transfer from General Fund unappropriated surplus; Department of Labor, Maine Apprenticeship Program, fiscal year 2025-26.** Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the State Controller shall transfer \$8,000,000 from the unappropriated surplus of the General Fund to the Maine Apprenticeship Program, Other Special Revenue Funds account within the Department of Labor on or before June 30, 2026 to support grants for preapprenticeship training programs.

These one-time funds shall be used for grants to support preapprenticeship training programs. It also includes funds for one Program Manager Employment and Training position to manage the grants to support certified preapprenticeship training programs.

## SUMMARY

This bill provides that preapprenticeship training programs may use grants from the Maine Apprenticeship Program for membership fees and costs, tools and personal protective equipment; for assistance to address obstacles to and to identify and access services necessary for an individual's successful participation in a preapprenticeship program; and for facilitating an individual's readiness to commence on-the-job learning in a registered apprenticeship program. The bill allocates a total of \$8,000,000 in fiscal year 2025-26 for grants to support preapprenticeship training programs and for one position in the Department of Labor to manage the grants to support preapprenticeship training programs. At least 51% of total grant funding must support preapprenticeship training programs that have demonstrated successful engagement and enrollment of and completion by individuals from historically marginalized communities in registered apprenticeship programs; that have consistently placed individuals in registered apprenticeship programs that lead to jobs that pay a total package value of no less than \$35 per hour, indexed for inflation; and that have demonstrated the provision of strong, comprehensive support services essential to ensure success.

The bill provides that certified preapprenticeship training programs that cannot prove that graduates are employed in the field of their preapprenticeship or are represented by a labor organization are ineligible for grants. It provides that any funds provided to support preapprenticeship training programs must be administered and awarded to programs with strong direct entry links with registered apprenticeship programs through a competitive process administered by the Department of Labor through the Maine Apprenticeship Program. These funds must be directed to preapprenticeship training programs that train individuals for priority sectors for high-wage, in-demand jobs and may be used for program development, support and staffing for grantees.