

LD 1226 - An Act to Establish Licensing Requirements for Residential Contractors

Testimony of John Brautigam, Esq. for Legal Services for Maine Elders Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development

April 17, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development.

My name is John Brautigam, and I am here today on behalf of Legal Services for Maine Elders. LSE provides free legal help for Mainers aged 60 and older when their basic human needs are at stake.

We support LD 1226, which would establish licensing requirements for residential general contractors and create a Residential Construction Board to oversee this licensing system.

Currently, Maine does not require residential construction contractors to be licensed. This means that anyone—regardless of qualifications, experience, or prior misconduct—can present themselves as a builder, remodeler, or contractor and take on significant projects in people's homes.

We regularly hear from older Mainers who have been harmed by unscrupulous or incompetent contractors. These homeowners face:

- Projects left unfinished, often after large payments have been made.
- Poor workmanship, leading to dangerous conditions, water damage, and the need for costly repairs.
- Contractors who disappear or become unreachable, with no realistic path for recourse.
- No licensing body to hold contractors accountable or to prevent repeat offenders from continuing to operate.

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This is not a matter of isolated incidents—it is a persistent and widespread consumer protection failure.

LD 1226 is particularly important for Maine's aging population. Older residents are:

- More likely to require home modifications to remain safe and independent.
- More often on fixed incomes, without the ability to absorb financial loss or hire a second contractor.
- More likely to live alone or in rural areas, where oversight and support are limited.
- Frequently targeted by dishonest contractors who believe they are less likely to push back or report misconduct.

Many older adults also come from a generation where business was done on a handshake. They may trust too easily and are often unaware that there is no license to verify or enforcement body to call.

LD 1226 provides a responsible and balanced path forward. It:

- Creates a licensing system to ensure that general residential contractors meet basic standards.
- Establishes a dedicated board to administer the system, handle violations, and ensure consumer protection.
- Brings Maine in line with the majority of other states that already have residential contractor licensing laws.

This is not an attack on small businesses or honest tradespeople. In fact, it will help reputable contractors by creating a level playing field and building consumer confidence in the industry.

When someone hires a contractor to build or improve their home, they are making a profound investment—often the largest of their lives. LD 1226 will help protect that investment, reduce fraud, and ensure that Mainers—especially older residents—are treated with fairness and respect.

We urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1226. Thank you for your attention, and for your work on behalf of Maine consumers.