



**Testimony of Garrett Mason
in Opposition to LD 1226**

"An Act to Protect Consumers by Licensing Home Building Contractors"

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing. My name is Garrett Mason. I am a resident of Lisbon Falls and a partner at Dirigo Public Affairs. I am here on behalf of my client the Associated Builders and Contractors of Maine in opposition to LD 1226.

First, we want to thank the sponsor for her work on this bill. We appreciate her concerns together with impacted customers and upstanding contractors. However, we feel the current law is sufficient to address the shortcomings of those contractors who are less than adequate at their job. Currently Maine law requires a contract for repairs over \$3,000 between a consumer and a contractor. There are also safeguards in place to protect from large up front payments. We believe these measures and others contained within the Home Contractors Law and The Maine Unfair Trade Practices act are sufficient to protect consumers without the need to create new law, a new board, and additional bureaucracy.

We appreciate the addition of prior experience as a way to qualify for the proposed licence compared to previous versions, however the bill leaves the door open to educational requirements in the future. Under the bill, the board could later implement more formalized education pathways, certifications, or continuing education as a condition of license renewal.

ABC Maine is also concerned that this new law could create a bottleneck in the construction trades that we have been trying our best to eliminate on all fronts. By instituting a licensing requirement on residential home contractors this bill may create a further shortage of workers resulting in longer waits for consumers and higher prices overall. The bill could also discourage people looking to move here from doing so because of such a licensing requirement.

Instead, ABC Maine would suggest a greater emphasis on public education efforts around consumer rights and the responsibilities contractors have to them. Many homeowners are not aware of the rights and protections they already have under existing law. A statewide outreach effort, perhaps in partnership with industry and consumer groups, could help address contractor misconduct without reducing workforce participation or increasing construction costs. ABC Maine is happy to sit at the table to find solutions on how industry and government can work together to engage in such a campaign.

We sympathize with those homeowners who have been victims of bad actors, but LD 1226 does not target the real problem. It creates a new barrier to entry without addressing enforcement of current protections. We encourage this committee to vote "ought not to pass" on this bill.