



Testimony of Maine Labor Climate Council Executive Director, Francis Eanes, in support of LD 1748, "An Act to Enhance Businesses' Understanding of Labor Standards and Grow Maine's Energy Economy Through a Training Program"

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, my name is Francis Eanes and I'm here today to speak in support of LD 1748. I'm the Executive Director of the Maine Labor Climate Council, a coalition of 20 labor unions here in the state of Maine working together to good jobs for all workers as our state transitions to clean energy.

As you well know, in recent years, the legislature — and indeed many of you on this committee — has passed several pieces of legislation that have collectively ensured just compensation and a skilled and trained workforce for Maine's emerging clean energy economy. The two most significant pieces of legislation added prevailing wage and registered apprenticeship utilization requirements for state-assisted renewable energy projects of a certain size, but there have been others as well that touch many facets of the clean energy economy.

Several years into the implementation of these pieces of legislation, however, one consistent theme stands out: when asked why they aren't complying with state law, developers and contractors say they simply didn't know about the expectations, or were not aware of resources to assist their compliance.

To take just one example: more than 2 years after the final rules were adopted for LD 1282, which required contractors building renewable energy projects greater than 2 megawatts to employ a certain number of registered apprentices in each craft, only two contractors had even attempted to respond. Both said they could were unable to find any apprentices. Over this same period of time dozens of qualifying projects were developed and fully built, totaling many hundreds of megawatts of electricity. Hundreds of apprentices were brought into the relevant trades over that period of time, and plenty of them would have been available.

By requiring developers of projects — projects, mind you, that receive significant state and federal subsidies — to attend a short training once every two years to learn the rules of the road in Maine, we make sure everyone is on equal footing. Good actors who want to do the right thing are rewarded, and those who might otherwise cut corners at least don't have plausible deniability.

We have to get this transition right for workers, and ensuring accountability for developers and contractors benefitting from public policy and subsidies is a practical step in the right direction. Thank you for your consideration, and please vote Ought To Pass.