



## **Testimony of Matt Marks in Support of LD 313**

*An Act To Advance Career and Technical Education Opportunities in Maine*

April 9, 2021 10:00 AM

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Good Morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Matt Marks; I am a Scarborough resident representing the Associated General Contractors of Maine today.

Maine's Career and Technical Education Centers are the formal starting point for many commercial construction industries. Their entry into CTE students is introduced to hands-on learning and connecting with industry leaders who provide support for programs and career options to aspiring builders.

Across the entire country, skilled workers are in high demand. This bill creates a pathway for students to explore options. With the elimination of industrial arts and home economics, many students currently have little to no exposure to many blue-collar careers. While the construction industry connects directly to instructors, administrators, and students who attend CTEs, the window for sharing careers with most students is limited.

In a survey conducted before the pandemic, all four regions of the country are experiencing similarly severe craft worker shortages, with 83 percent of contractors in the West and South reporting a hard time filling hourly craft positions, almost identical to the 81 percent rate in the Midwest and 75 percent rate in the Northeast.

According to the Federal Reserve, the average college debt among student loan borrowers in America is \$32,731. This is an increase of approximately 20% from 2015-2016. Most borrowers have between \$25,000 and \$50,000 outstanding in student loan debt. Maine has a tremendous opportunity to provide the starting education that will give lifelong careers without a young resident being strapped by debt on day one of their careers.

We urge support for this bill, and we are happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted by,

Matt Marks, AGC Maine