



Testimony of Matt Marks in Support of LD 1329

An Act To Establish the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative in the Department of Education
To Lower Barriers to Career Advancement
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
April 22, 2021

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Matt Marks; I am a resident of Scarborough and CEO of AGC Maine. We urge the Committee to support LD 1329.

AGC Maine supports the investment of a Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative within the Department of Education. The model in this bill connects career seekers, educators, and industry to find pathways that have a mutual benefit. Right now, the construction industry is in high demand. As you know, we continue to rebuild a skilled workforce after losing 26% of the industry during the great recession in 2009. We finally crested 30,000 construction workers in the field in 2020. But the industry will continue to feel extreme pressure as more retire than we can hire to replace.

Combining industry training, apprenticeships, and direct hires with those who have experience is instrumental in our mission. The reduction of students in K-12 over the last few decades has reduced the available pool of candidates who would consider trades. Additionally, removing a basic understanding of using tools in programs like industrial arts has a direct impact. Today the industry adapted programs for training new hires to provide a basic introduction on tools, measuring, and topics like construction math.

With this bill, the program will identify potential constructors by evaluating skills, desire to learn a trade, and building on the tools the individual needs to transition into our economy. Without a program to assist those who might have barriers with language, workplace culture, or basic employment skills, we fail to produce opportunities for individuals and businesses. A positive design of this bill is the flexibility to adjust to the state's economic needs. Working with employers, the program will adjust vocational skills to market demand and employee skills.

Having the tools to accelerate the process will increase earning potential, reduce the learning curve, and assist employees who are struggling to find qualified applicants. In our opinion, this pathway provides a welcoming approach to building a new generation of constructors. We urge the Committee to pass the bill.

Respectfully submitted by,

Matt Marks, AGC Maine