

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the committee:

My name is Jonathan McKane and I have been a licensed master electrician in the state of Maine since 1980.

For the record, and as some of you may know, I also sit on the Maine Electricians Examining Board and I want to be clear that my testimony in no way reflects any position of the board.

I have also been a union member including shipbuilders, steel workers, paper workers, I understand the view of organized labor.

I believe this is a good bill and one that I and some of our colleagues in the electrical trade have talked about in the past. Most electricians I know could easily handle two more helpers working under them for much of what we do every day - drilling holes, nailing on boxes, running conduit, running cables , building supports for fixtures and panels, and digging ditches.

But whatever work is done, it is and has been the journeyman who oversees the project and ultimately the master electrician who oversees the business who is responsible for all of the work done – no matter who actually performs the actual labor.

There are people in Maine right now who want to be in the electrical trade. There simply aren't enough masters and journeymen out there to employ them at the current ratio of one to one.

This current law not only keeps young people from entering the trade, but it keeps demand very high. From comments received recently by the Electricians Examining Board on a proposed rule change, the problem of too few electricians in this state has become acute.

This situation can create safety issues.

It is very busy for electricians right now. We are scheduling work months out. We try and set aside time for emergencies and urgent work but we can't always get to it.

Here's what I've found out: When you put potential customers too far out with what they feel is an urgent situation, and they can't find any licensed person to do the work, they will often find an unlicensed person. Or they do it themselves. In these cases, they will be lucky if the final product actually works as it should and is up to code - let alone is safe.

Expanding the number of licensed helpers who could legally work under licensed journeymen and master electricians would begin to alleviate this shortage and would be a win-win for all involved and for this state.

Jonathan McKane
30 Bayview Rd
Newcastle, ME 04553

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