



Commercial/Industrial - Design/Build Mechanical Contracting Specialists

Testimony of Albert W. Allen (and colleagues) in Opposition to LD1691
An Act to Require Licensing for Certain Mechanical Trades
Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business
May 13, 2021 9:30 AM

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business. My name is Albert Allen. I am a resident of Hermon Maine and I am here today to testify against LD 1691.

I am one of three founders of ABM Mechanical, Inc. and currently serve as Vice President and Chief Financial Officer. I am a CPA by training and have served in private industry in corporate executive financial and administrative roles for the past 30 years. I grew up on a potato farm in Aroostook County and consider myself a lifelong Mainer.

ABM Mechanical, Inc. started in a barn owned by one of my partners back in 1995 – 26 years ago. We converted the barn into a shop and office space, starting the business with two plumbers and a helper and a part time bookkeeper. Since then, we have grown to be one of the largest most relied on mechanical contractors in the State with a presence from Kittery to Ft. Kent and everywhere in between. We currently have 120 employees.

Our work requires us to perform and/or oversee the installation and maintenance of all the mechanical work except fire suppression that is the target of regulation in LD1691.

Summary of our Opposition

Why do we need another expensive layer of government regulation and licensing requirements on an industry in Maine that generally is void of any obvious deficiency in safety, quality or performance standards? It makes no sense. And the unintended consequences to Maine businesses will be tragic and perhaps fatal to many.

Who stands to benefit from this bill, if passed? Out of State Contractors. This bill seems to conform to a model oddly formatted for a more “metropolitan” geography like Boston? Hartford? Providence? New York City?

This bill will devastate our business. It will devastate every Maine business in the mechanical, sheetmetal, pipefitting, fire suppression, insulating and refrigeration trades. It will be felt upstream and downstream in the construction and related industries.

Worse still, this bill creates obstacles for future business owners to get into this trade. If it wasn't difficult already to convince young people that the “trades” offer a viable opportunity to have a satisfying well paying long term career, this bill will make that effort impossible.



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LD1691 will force the industry to look outside the state for resources to complete the mechanical, sheetmetal, pipefitting, fire suppression, insulating and refrigeration scopes of work. There is a chronic lack of available manpower available right now to complete the work we have. ABM would hire 20 employees tomorrow if we could find anyone with a modest level of qualifications and work ethic. They are not available. Putting more obstacles, cost, regulations and complications in the way of would be future tradesmen and women will make a very dire situation worse.

Reasons to Reject this Bill

1. **It appears LD1691, if passed, will create an entirely new regulation agency** and/or department. The State of Maine taxpayers will shoulder this burden. *It will be very expensive.*
2. **If LD1691 is passed, Maine construction projects in the future will be tilted towards out of State contractors** from more metropolitan areas that conform to this “Organized Labor” model with apprenticeship requirements and “master” designations. This will increase the cost of Maine construction significantly as the overhead and additional layer of administration to manage this across the industry is immense. Maine contractors and employees working for Maine contractors will be direct losers in this transition. **MAINE EMPLOYEES WILL LOSE THEIR JOBS.** There will be a ripple throughout the industry.
3. **This bill appears to be a solution looking for a problem.** We are not aware of any remarkable and/or notable weaknesses in safety, quality or performance. Each of the trades noted are required to follow engineer prepared specific material manufacturing, quality and installation guidelines that come with contractual obligations very costly if violated.
4. **LD1691 will make doing business in Maine more costly, more difficult, and less likely** for many that would otherwise put in the extraordinary efforts required to be successful.

With all due respect, please vote “Ought NOT to pass on LD1691”.

I want to thank all the members of the committee for giving me this opportunity to present today. I can be reached anytime for follow-up questions or clarifications.

Albert W. Allen

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We have circulated this to some of our employees to ask them if they would be willing to support our position on this matter. On such short notice the following have responded in the affirmative.



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Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Albert W. Allen'.

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Vice President and Chief Financial Officer

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Corinth, Maine

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Dixmont, Maine

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