



## **Testimony of Alexandria Chase in Opposition to LD 1691**

### *An Act To Require Licensing for Certain Mechanical Trade*

Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business May 13,  
2021 9:30 AM

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business. My name is **Alexandria Chase**. I am a resident of **Windham, ME** and I am here today to testify against LD 1691.

**Aero Heating & Ventilating Incorporated is a 100% Employee Owned (ESOP) Sheetmetal Ductwork company founded in 1990 by Maine resident Clair Crandall: Current President and ESOP Trustee.**

I have worked in Human Resources in Maine for the past 15 years. Throughout my professional career in Maine, one common theme is the complaint that Maine is one of the oldest states in the nation and struggles to retain young people. Another common theme throughout industries is the acknowledgement that the younger demographic is not interested in entering blue collar industries – specifically the trades. With so many parents pushing their children to attend college instead of entering the trades, the industry has been suffering. This is a nation-wide problem, and Maine is no exception. Recruiting is potentially the most challenging aspect of my job: trying to find adequate talent has never been easy, but this is even more the case with the trades.

While training and education are essential components to learning a job, requiring state-controlled licensing is not. This is nothing more than unnecessary red tape to generate additional income. It creates cost-prohibitive situations for Maine businesses that are already hurting. Adding more bureaucracy is not the solution. Adding another obstacle for the younger demographic entering the trades is not an answer either.

Aero currently has 71 employees. The average age is 43. Among the 45 field workers, the average age is still 42. A number of these employees entered the trade at an older age – not straight out of high school. They had no prior sheet metal experience, meaning they would be impacted by the proposed law had it been in effect when they started. This likely would have prevented them from joining Aero, which would have placed more strain on our current staff and negatively impacted our bottom line.

As you can see, we are an aging company. The ability to attract and retain younger talent is one of our primary goals in the near future, and we are currently developing a program to achieve this. Adding an unnecessary barrier to the younger demographic entering this trade would severely impact our ability to recruit new, younger employees.

Furthermore, this licensure requirement would disparately impact marginalized demographics like New Mainers, who would be less likely to complete apprenticeship programs. The time and financial resources required would likely be prohibitive to a number of demographics.

In a time when the Maine economy is already in a dire situation, further crippling the construction industry is the last thing that should even be considered. If this was truly good for the state, the mechanical contracting industry, and the Maine construction industry, why are so many businesses vehemently opposed to it? Advocates will cite safety and accountability as benefits; however, these are not problems that currently exist in this industry in the State of Maine. In the end, this would create far more problems than it sets out to amend. Therefore, I respectfully request that you vote against this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I can be reached at [achase@aerohv.com](mailto:achase@aerohv.com) or (207) 887-9047 x107.