



Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business; My name is Chris Maheux, and I am the Vice President of Maine Fire Protection. Today, I am representing Associated Builders and Contractors of Maine. ABC is a national association with 69 chapters representing more than 21,000 merit shop construction and construction-related firms. Here in Maine, ABC represents over 170 businesses across the state – many are located in districts that you all represent. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

As a member of ABC Maine's Government Affairs committee, I am here today to speak in opposition to LD 1691, "An Act To Require Licensing for Certain Mechanical Trades." This bill will make it more difficult for Maine companies to be on the job.

Now is not the time to add barriers to entry within the construction industry. As the State prepares to see an increase in work following a slow 2020, we need all of the qualified help we can get in the field to get the job done. Though we appreciate that certain journeyman contactors will be grandfathered in without the need for licensing, this does little to help curtail the workforce shortage that Maine is facing in the trades. As we continue to encourage young Mainers to enter the trades and live and work in Maine, now is not the time to make this process more difficult. The demand for work is here and it will only get more profound over the coming months. Let's make sure we have the workforce to meet this demand.

Furthermore, the creation of a new state agency to administer this program will be a costly and unnecessary burden on the State. We also question the need for such an agency to be created. There does not seem to be compelling evidence that large amounts of contractor malfeasance has led to this bill being considered. Requiring these new contracts to gain these new licences will only serve as another barrier to entry in the industry and will make the process more complex and time consuming for Maine's already busy contractors.

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and begin to see an increase in available work across the state, let's not take this time to add more burdens to an industry who like so many others is still feeling the effects of a difficult 2020.

On behalf of ABC Maine and the members we represent I would ask that you vote ought not to pass on LD 1691.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

