



Testimony of RYAN PETERS, President of Lakeside Concrete Cutting, Inc. 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 Ryan Peters, I am a resident of Newport, Maine and I am here today to testify against LD 1691. I have lived and worked in Maine my whole life, graduated from UMaine with a degree in Construction Management, and have worked in the construction industry for over 20 years. I own a small business employing 40-50 employees with offices in Newport and Westbrook, Maine. I consider myself extremely knowledgeable of the construction industry in Maine and understand the numerous challenges facing my industry.

Proponents of this bill will say this bill makes sure mechanical trades are qualified, protects public health, welfare and safety, as well as increasing accountability. However, I know this bill is unnecessary and I am happy to help explain why.

We work as a subcontractor for many Maine mechanical contractors. We are hired by mechanical contractors to help perform less-skilled labor-heavy activities like drilling holes in concrete because mechanical companies need to keep their higher skilled workers performing the skilled and safety sensitive mechanical work. There is an extreme labor shortage across our state and across our industry. We have spent tens of thousands over the past twelve months advertising for workers. This expense is over a 1000% increase for this expense category over any previous year. We still cannot find the workers we need and we are spending another \$20,000 more this month to recruit employees from Puerto Rico.

Creating a new, complex licensing process only increases barriers for workers entering the mechanical trade. Contractors already feel like their hiring pool is the people who cannot find work anywhere else. We already pay entry level workers a hire wage than other industries, but that is actually not the incentive which draws our applicants attention. What they want to know is that they have a strong opportunity for quick advancement. In my company, they truly do have that opportunity. This bill crushes an entry level construction worker applicant's hopes of quick advancement by placing yet another barrier.

Maine's mechanical companies already have training programs, they have quality control departments, and they have safety managers. These checks and balances are already in place. We do not need a State department to perform these tasks. If the state created this position, I am not confident they would even be able to find qualified people to fill the roles of those

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departments. I know for certain the Maine DEP is currently experiencing a staffing shortage which is extremely disruptive and prevents them from fulfilling their responsibilities. I can't imagine finding extremely qualified people to run a new State agency will be easy. Furthermore, this bill is clearly modeled after licensing in states where an attempt is made to lock-out nonunion trades, which is obviously bad for Maine.

Thank you Senator Curry and Members of the Committee for your valuable time considering my point of view. I am available to answer any questions you may have for me. My email is rpeters@lakesideap.com and my cell is (207) 745-5567.

Regards,

Ryan Peters