



May 14, 2021

To: The Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business

RE: **LD 1691**– An Act to Require Licensing for Certain Mechanical Trades

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business:

My name is Kevin A. Purnell, and I am the President and Co-Founder of Granite Corp, a mechanical contractor in Oakland, Maine. I am submitting this testimony in my capacity as a business owner and employer in the State of Maine with more than 20 years of experience, and as a professional tradesman in the State of Maine licensed in plumbing, gas, and oil, in addition to several Federal certifications and completion of trade-related training and continuing education courses over the years.

I submit this testimony alongside my industry counterparts to express my opposition to this bill, in addition to any effort to implement duplicative or excessive modifications to the current state licensing regime in our industry.

Currently, many tradespeople in our Industry work on multiple systems and retain multiple licenses to perform work. Currently we have Plumbing, Gas, Oil, EPA, and Solid Fuel licenses, as well as Limited Electrical and Electrician licenses, all of which are necessary to perform work in the mechanical trades and which most companies doing mechanical work in Maine hold under one roof. Maine is not like many other states where the trades are separated. Maine contractors are more of a one stop shop and for the most part only out-of-state contractors really require separation for plumbing and mechanical costs. We here pride ourselves in offering full trade services under one roof and generally will not price trades separate unless it is a larger project and/or there is a schedule conflict on completing work.

We also work with Efficiency of Maine to assist in rebates on Energy Efficient installations and they recently changed some of their processes. To get rebates on heat pumps and some other equipment, factory training is required and needs to be completed by the installers. This training is in addition to the licenses we already have, and we have four (4) lines of training needed for all employees to meet these guidelines as well as completing the program for Efficiency of Maine. We also have manufacturer requirements on other numerous products being installed in the mechanical and plumbing trade, many of which require product training before you can purchase and/or get special startup of units in the State.

We currently have a heavy burden of responsibility on projects and no one above us on the construction team is licensed other than the architect and engineers. If the intent of LD1691 is to look at quality standards and delivery methods of projects and systems, consider adding

licenses in industries other than ours to ensure professionalism and safety of installations in the State of Maine beyond the plumbing, HVAC, and electrical trades.

We have numerous people here at Granite Corp that are more than willing to come to a public meeting to demonstrate our opposition to this bill. We implore you to take the necessary time and due diligence for proper debate regarding this legislation and strongly consider the feedback offered by the Maine employers who will be negatively impacted.

Furthermore, we are contending with a skilled trades workforce shortage in the state due to difficulties in attracting a younger generation of workers, a problem compounded with an aging workforce that is retiring. We are often prohibited from approaching secondary school students to try and layout great career options for graduates. Rather than implementing more licensing restrictions in Maine, we need to focus on providing state assistance to high schools, community colleges, and other institutions to promote the skilled trades as a viable career path for high school students preparing to transition to life after graduation, as well as those who seek to start a new career in a high-demand field. The skilled trades are often overlooked as a secure path to middle class. We offer a career path that is always in demand, requiring skilled hands that will never be replaced by automation. Our education programs offer paid on-the-job training, and journeymen and women entering the field have little if any student loan debt compared to their counterparts graduating from four-year university, have entry-level salaries that are higher than college graduates, not to mention a pathway to employment in their chosen field.

We urge the committee to vote against LD 1691 and invite you to join us for a workshop or roundtable discussion on policy ideas that work both for the people of Maine and our industry. Thank you for your consideration.