



Senator Joe Rafferty
3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0003
Office (207) 287-1515
Joe.Rafferty@legislature.maine.gov

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Good Morning Representative Sylvester and distinguished members of the Labor and Housing Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you this morning in relation to LR 29 - An Act to Conform the Maine Apprenticeship Program to the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972.

I'd like to share some background on the proposal and why it is necessary. The U.S. Department of Labor updated its Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) in Apprenticeship regulations in January 2017 to reflect the 21st century workplace and changes in EEO laws. The goal was to position registered apprenticeship programs to grow and meet demands of industry while ensuring adequate updated protection of equal employment opportunity.

This bill proposes required statutory changes to ensure conformity with federal EEO changes, ensure Maine Department of Labor as State Approving Agency, and help sponsors of apprenticeships reach a larger more diverse pool of applicants.

Last session, the Department submitted this same bill, however, the Legislature adjourned prior to action being taken so we need to resubmit the bill to have it reconsidered and take this necessary action.

I do have some folks from the Department of Labor available this morning that may offer more insight. If there are not any objections, I will let them fill in any facts I may have missed and help answer your questions.

Thank you,

Joe Rafferty