

Jason Shedlock  
Laborers' International Union

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Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Sylvester and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Jason J. Shedlock and I am a Regional Organizer for the Laborers' International Union of North America. I am also a Trustee and Executive Board Member of both the Maine AFL-CIO and the Southern Maine Labor Council and a resident of South Portland. I appear before you in support of LD 469, "An Act to Ensure Safety across Maine's Construction Industry."

Currently 10 states, including neighboring New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania; require at least a baseline of ten hours of OSHA-approved safety training on publicly-funded job sites. Many cities around the country also have this requirement in place. Even closer to home, the City of Portland recently passed, via citizens' referendum, an OSHA 10 requirement for all city-funded projects over \$50,000. LD 469 doesn't break new ground. In fact, in an industry where a thirty-hour course is becoming the norm, a ten-hour training is a reasonable baseline to set to ensure all workers come to the jobsite with the same set of basic safety knowledge.

Some might state that this law is unnecessary and overly cautious; that most people in the industry already possess this knowledge. To that, I would say: that's good, they should. But we in the industry know that until all workers arrive at every jobsite with safety in mind and this certification in their back pocket, we are not doing our very best to ensure everyone is out of harm's way. Maine taxpayers should know that when their money is being spent on a construction project, that the workers on that project are being protected. The state putting in place basic guidelines to ensure every worker gets ten hours of safety training is not a heavy lift, and the small administrative function at the state level must be weighed against keeping Mainers safe.

I offer a very recent example of the necessity of this program. When Portland published their first RFPs in January, one of the first questions to be asked publicly as a part of that process was whether or not the flaggers on the project had to adhere to the OSHA 10 requirements. Only because of the recent law passed, the answer was yes. Think of this: this is Maine's largest city, and the question was whether or not a flagger, standing in traffic and working with dangerous, heavy equipment needed to have safety training? The fact that a prospective bidder even had to ask this shows that we have a problem. And LD 469 is the solution statewide.

Finally, I will relay one final metaphor. We know that as we get behind the wheel or our cars each day, while there are some good drivers and some not so much, everyone has to have some training, and take some sort of test to get a license to keep in their wallet. What we're asking the Committee to approve is for every construction worker on a state-funded construction site to have some baseline of knowledge to ensure that everyone - union and non union, across the entire industry, is safe.

While we can work out the exact details, and I'm sure the Committee and the Administration can do that - the Laborers' are glad to help - the fact is that the state should lead by example and make sure that all workers on state-funded jobs have this basic safety knowledge. I trust you'll agree. Please vote ought to pass on LD 469. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

Jason J. Shedlock  
Regional Organizer  
Laborers' International Union of North America  
jshedlock@lnerof.org  
(207) 317-1447

Resident: South Portland, Maine