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In Support – LD648

An Act to Improve the Lives of Maine Workers by Supporting Apprenticeships That Lead to Good-paying Jobs

Dear Senator Hickman, Chair, Representative Sylvester, Chair, and Members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

My name is Alice Ames and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Association of Plumbing, Heating, Cooling Contractors, Inc. (Maine PHCC)

Maine PHCC is a trade association representing small and large plumbing, heating, and cooling businesses throughout the State.

Our industry seriously lacks the workforce needed to serve the citizens of this state. The trend is getting worse every year as the skilled trades people are retiring at a much faster rate than new workers entering the trades. The average age for a plumbing and heating contractor in the State of Maine is 60 years old.

The National Association of PHCC has developed a federally approved 4-year apprenticeship program that allows for individuals to earn while they learn. The starting wage is 63% of the journeyman rate by each individual company. Currently there are 31 apprentices enrolled and they all started at or above \$15.00 an hour and earn a 5% increase every 6 months and at the end of 4 years would be at \$24.00.

Women are highly encouraged to participate in the trade. We attend middle and high school job fairs promoting the opportunity for many occupations in the plumbing and hvacr industry. The opportunities for high paying,

interesting careers are great when you have learned a trade. You can be the Business Owner, Manager, Sales Rep, Showroom coordinator, Estimator, Inspector, Drafter, Plumbing tech, hvac tech to name just a few. I began my career in a supply house taking plumbing classes at the vocational center in the evening in addition to business classes at USM. When the supply house abruptly shut down, I was pursued by a large mechanical contractor looking for someone with knowledge of the trade as well as business. I worked in the office doing invoice pricing, accounting, and dispatching and eventually going out to do estimates and sales. After doing that for several years the owner of the company encouraged me to apply for the Executive Director position of the Maine PHCC. Our National Association has produced an excellent video specifically for women.

Maine PHCC sponsors an annual apprenticeship contest at our annual tradeshow and our most recent winner was a woman in her 50's. It was noted by the judges that she was the first contestant in our 11<sup>th</sup> annual contest to have earned a perfect score because of her attention to the small details that all the men had avoided. The Association sponsored her to participate in the National PHCC Apprenticeship Contest in Indianapolis. Several of our members wanted to hire her but she already had a job she was happy with.

Funding for apprenticeships will go a long way to ensure that Maine has quality, high paying jobs for men and women. Please support LD 648.