

Grant Provost
Brunswick

Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and the members of the Joint Standing Committee for Labor and Housing. My name is Grant Provost I am the Business Agent for Ironworkers Local 7 in the State of Maine and I rise in favor of LD 648, An Act To Improve the Lives of Maine Workers by Supporting Apprenticeships That Lead to Good-Paying Jobs. I am whole heartedly on board with this bill. What I believe gets lost in the translation here is, on what grounds should the tax payers of Maine be funding programs that lead to jobs where the employees would intern need to be on State assistance, even after finding employment. Why would the tax payers of Maine fund employers that start apprenticeships which do not lead to a craft or profession that would better them and there family. The whole premise behind apprenticeships, an over thousand year old practice, is that it leads to a well paid trade, where equitable knowledge is passed from one generation of Master to another thus advancing not only said craft but civilization in general. Why are we constantly trying to reinvent the wheel on this? Apprenticeships are not about quantity they are about quality. For myself I see it as public safety. Our local communities us the bridges, ports, buildings and airports that we construct. They must be done at the highest level of competence and that is why we train our members to be masters in their field. Before the pandemic I invited a contractor to our Union Hall. The contractor was interested in becoming Signatory to our Collective Bargaining Agreement with other Construction Contractors Association . As the contractor toured our facility their CEO asked how our apprenticeship participation was each year and what our application numbers were. When I told him that of the 1000 applications we received for the 80 available positions he was amazed. The contractors team mentioned trying to recruit employees from one of the local community colleges (New Hampshire based) and how it had been difficult with low participation in their welding program. He asked why we had such high participation while others struggle. Really the answer was simple, we do not charge a tuition for our classes and we give hands on experience with high pay. What does that mean? It means that while one is an apprentice working is not only an option, on the job experience is mandatory. It also means as you reach certain earmarks and pass a series of tests your pay increases. This goes on until you reach journey person status where you receive a graduation certificate and/or a license in that trade. This and programs like it allow many people who would be unable to go t school the option to do so in a well paying career with excellent benefits. This an example of a program that should be supported, one that supports Maine people everyday and this is reason I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 648.

Sincerely,
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