



MAINE AFL-CIO

A Union of Unions Standing for Maine Workers
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Testimony of Maine AFL-CIO Legislative & Political Director, Adam Goode, in Support of LD 648, "An Act To Improve the Lives of Maine Workers by Supporting Apprenticeships That Lead to Good-paying Jobs"

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and members of Labor & Housing Committee, my name is Adam Goode. I'm the Legislative and Political Director of the Maine AFL-CIO. We represent 40,000 working people in the state of Maine. We work to improve the lives and working conditions of our members and all working people. We testify in support of LD 648.

Registered apprenticeship programs train workers across the United States to become highly-skilled, construction workers through a debt-free, technologically-advanced education who earn a solid wage to support their family. In the construction industry, registered apprenticeship programs help recruit, train and retain workers with progressive wage increases, apprentice-to-journeyworker ratios that promote safety, uniform standards, safety training and eligibility requirements for instructors.

This model is based on apprenticeship programs that are registered with either the national Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship or the State Apprenticeship Agencies. The programs provide participants with a high quality, portable, industry sanctioned, nationally recognized credential that certifies occupational proficiency in their trade.

This is what people think about when they hear the word "apprenticeship". This bill is designed to target apprenticeship resources to those programs. There has been a growth of a different training model, one that has less consistent work, is shorter in training and often results in lower wages.

In recent years, at least 3 affiliate unions of the Maine AFL-CIO who run apprenticeship programs have seen significant cuts due to the increased crowding out of the program. These cuts impact student learning and the opportunity to train the next generation of workers in Maine. A standard that 75% of funding for apprenticeships be directed to programs that start with wages that are 1.25 times the Maine minimum wage and culminate in the student earning 1.5 times the Maine minimum wage is a modest expectation.

This approach strikes a balance. Programs that pay a lower wage can receive support, but will be less likely to chip away at the traditional and popular sense of what it means for Maine to invest in apprenticeships. Many of those programs have access to Maine Quality Center and Competitive Skills Scholarship funding, which is either based on the individual or in house training cannot access.

The longstanding model of registered apprenticeships should be the priority of Maine's approach. There is a reason why it is popular and effective. Nationally, if the building trades training system was a public university system, it would be the third largest public university system in the United States.¹ We urge you to vote for LD 648.

¹North America's Building Trades Unions Research Department – Comparison of Building Trades JATC Active Apprentices and Enrollment, Largest U.S. Public University Systems, 2015