

April 9, 2021

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. My name is Larry Grondin and I am here today representing R. J. Grondin & Sons, a third generation, family-owned, open shop Maine company employing 150 good Mainers. I am here to speak in opposition to LD 1231.

LD 1231 is an attempt to create a new set of ground rules that do not help move Maine's clean energy future ahead in any way. It does not increase the amount of available renewable energy, and it does not increase the reliability of our power grid. LD 1231 only makes renewable energy projects more expensive. However, as I read the original bill and the accompanying amendment, I do see something that it does do - it increases the payout on these projects for a select few, mostly union organizations that only serve a little more than 16 percent of the working population in Maine. If we are serious about moving Maine towards sustainable and renewable energy you must reject this bill.

The inclusion of a mandated preference for contractors that have negotiated a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) will only drive the cost of construction up resulting in less value added for the taxpayer, fewer base load generator approvals, and fewer jobs for Maine people. The mandates listed in this bill would disqualify many contractors in Maine from working on large projects in the future simply because they can't meet the requirements.

Requiring PLAs strip workers of their choice not to join a union. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 84 percent of Maine people do not belong to a union. Requiring or incentivizing PLAs force workers to go through a union hall to do business; something they chose not to do in the first place. By leaving out most of Maine's workforce from eligibility we are creating more jobs for people from away and taking away opportunities for our own people.

PLAs also hamper industry efforts to create and maintain world class apprenticeship programs. By limiting the pool of qualified workers to union only you strip the industry of giving quality training time to apprentices who need to complete their programs. In 2021, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 430,000 more skilled workers were needed in the United States to meet construction demand. We need to train as many people as we can get. PLAs hamper that effort.

I urge you to vote ***ought not to pass*** on LD 1231.