

Elizabeth Kleene
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Hello and thank you for listening to my comments. My name is Elizabeth Kleene, I live in 04102 and I'm currently a 3rd year electrical apprentice at local 567. I wanted to voice my support for LD 1231. Bills like this must pass if we're serious about counteracting climate change and transitioning to a clean energy economy.

I generally always support initiatives in renewable energy, however these new jobs in renewable energy must be competitive with jobs in the current petroleum economy. I don't see a viable way to make a transition to renewables if we take away millions of well-paying jobs that have good benefits and try to replace them with jobs that pay a fraction of what these workers formerly made in salary and benefits. The same standards must be applied in renewable energy as to petroleum based jobs to facilitate a smooth transition and make progress toward a sustainable future.

I've had a lot of experience installing solar systems over the past 3 years. So far I've worked on 4 huge solar fields and countless residential homes. I've worked for both union and non-union companies. One issue I want to stress is how difficult and dangerous this kind of work is. Even if the project is not electrically complex, a typical solar installation is physically very demanding and inherently dangerous. Falling and ladder work are the leading cause of injuries in the construction industry. Solar work is inherently dangerous because of the heights and being on roofs, ladders, and the heavy solar panels you're constantly wrestling into position. From my experience in working on large solar fields, I can tell you that in winter, this work involves moving and climbing a 12-24' ladder maybe a hundred or two hundred times a day, setting the ladder on very uneven ground, on top of piles of snow or on sheets of ice, in freezing to sub-zero temperatures, sometimes in snow or freezing rain. In Maine summers, the temperature on roofs is often over 145 degrees, and even in a large Solar field the heat is still extreme and the work is dangerous and draining.

You need 4 years of classes and 8,000 hours of job training to take the journeyman license exam. I wouldn't hire someone to do work on my home electrical system without that training, and I wouldn't want people working on gov. infrastructure without the same proper training. I can say from first hand experience that the apprenticeship program has made a positive impact in my life. It's meant that I can earn a living, learn a trade without going farther into debt. I wouldn't have been able to get into this trade without the program. If we are going to tackle climate change at the pace we need to have to build a skilled, local workforce to do it. We have to make sure people get really good training, are paid well for their labor and that we are bringing a diverse set of people into these jobs.