

Testimony of Will Purington II in Opposition to LD 1231
“An Act Concerning Climate and Community Investment Projects.”
130th Maine Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing
April 9, 2021

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Will Purington. I am a resident of Manchester and a lifelong contractor at Maine Drilling & Blasting based in Gardiner. Today I am here to speak in opposition to this bill.

Energy construction has been a cornerstone in my career. When I attended UMaine, my summers were spent working on the top of mountains - building wind turbines. Maine's energy market's growth directly helped our company build the expertise and equipment to meet the demand of developers. We continued to invest in the tools needed to expand our work throughout the northeast in renewable energy. Learning this week that the education and experience would not be enough to qualify our company to bid for work in our home state is discouraging.

I want to speak directly on some appearances that may or may not reflect your opinion of Maine's construction industry. I get the distinct sense that many believe that open shop contractors are not treating their employees well, and that can't be further from the truth. Wages, benefits, and even the possibility of becoming an employee-owner are stronger today for skilled and new craft workers than ever before. Maine Drilling and Blasting's, employee stock ownership became an option in 2004. Today there are 293 active employees in the Company's ESOP, and right now 182 are 100% vested. That's in addition to a robust 401k retirement plan, health benefits, and competitive pay. I invite you to visit a job or our shop to see yourself the growth and opportunity we offer.

Enacting a measure that forces developers to adopt union-driven project labor agreements is discriminatory against the vast majority of Maine's skilled workers. Shutting out the same blue-collar workers who are building renewable energy and choose to live and work here is wrong. It's also unfair to ask Maine's construction firms, the majority started by Mainers, to survive in the market. They need to turn away their dedicated employees for workers because they are not paying union dues.

Safety is more than one training class or a hard hat sticker at our company. We've adopted a company-wide safety program that includes OSHA 10-hour, Dupont Safety Training Observation Program (STOP), MSHA Part 46, Job Hazard Analysis, Division Safety Talks, and Daily Checks Lessons Learned protocols. Limiting risk includes:

- Beating the industry average for worker's compensation experience modification rating for ten years.
- We are conducting more than 700 pre-blast surveys every year.

- Adopting a zero-incident tolerance.

We provide Driller trainee mentoring and certification programs, Blaster Training and Certification, and CDL-Hazmat internal driver qualification instruction and certifications for the skilled craft workers.

This market is highly competitive, and we provide top-of-the-line benefits to all employees. We offer comprehensive insurance including health, life, short-term and long-term disability. Our company has a retirement program that includes a 401k and employer stock ownership with company contributions.

We have paid time off that exceeds many company standards, including volunteer time off. This program is to encourage participation in the communities that we work and live. MD&B also provides training programs for college interns through our Advanced Summer Help program, for new college operational hires, through our Construction Superintendent Trainee program, and Leadership Development programs for managers and executives, including one-on-one coaching mentoring programs.

Maine companies are building a new generation of contractors, and it's unfair to set new government mandates that insinuate our model isn't helping Maine people. It simply isn't true. Right now, we are working on renewable energy projects in Maine. If you pass this bill, you are sending a message that Maine people who are skilled in this area and pay the renewable tax credits costs, cannot build the most significant projects. I encourage you to reject this bill, allow for fair competition.