

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Katrina Ray-Saulis and I'm a resident of Augusta. I'm a member of the Maine Service Employees Association, SEIU Local 1989, and I'm writing on my own time in support of LD 1231, An Act Concerning Climate and Community Investment Projects, sponsored by Representative Cuddy.

There's no denying the science; climate change is a real and immediate threat that needs to be addressed on the local, state, federal, and national level. Maine has a goal of having 80% renewable energy by 2030, and 100% renewable energy by 2050, which means that we'll be seeing a surge of renewable energy projects across our state over the coming decades, and a surge of jobs. This bill would ensure that jobs in the clean energy economy pay decent wages with benefits, include training opportunities through apprenticeship, and prioritize the safety of workers. Not only that, but it would also help advance equity by encouraging the hiring of indigenous people, people of color, women, and veterans. We will only advance economic justice and equity in our response to climate change if we make deliberate decisions to put labor, job quality, and equity standards in our policies. LD 1231 would be a huge step in the right direction toward doing so.

Personally, I work hard to ensure that I can provide for myself and my family. I currently work as an adjunct professor at not one, but two community colleges within the MCCS system, and outside of that, I also take on temp gigs as a nanny, an artist, a freelance writer, a tutor, and whatever else comes my way. I don't turn down work because I can't afford to. I know that I am not alone; many Mainers make ends meet in the same way, piecing together part time work and gig work and other ways of generating income to ensure they can pay their bills each month. Maine is in desperate need of good-paying, full-time jobs with benefits, and we have the opportunity with this bill to ensure that our investments in the renewable energy economy are also investments in high quality jobs. We constantly hear how young Mainers leave our state in search of opportunities that don't exist here; the apprenticeships included within this legislation would go a long way to help Mainers learn new trades and skills, while also being able to support themselves and their families.

I have been fighting for years for full time employment in the field that I love, teaching at the community college level. During my time as an adjunct professor, I have watched full-time professors retire and be replaced with multiple part time, low-paid, no-benefit adjunct positions. It's disappointing at best to watch these opportunities disappear before my eyes. With this bill, we can take a proactive step to ensure that the renewable energy sector does not follow suit, and contains good-paying jobs with benefits, rather than part-time or minimum wage jobs.

Long story short, we need to act immediately and rapidly to address climate change. But, we also need to create good paying jobs and apprenticeships, and to address inequities across our state. With LD 1231, we can take a big step in the right direction. I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 1231. Thank you for your consideration.