

Grant Provost
Brunswick

Good afternoon, Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and Members of the Labor and housing committee, my name is Grant Provost, I am the Business Agent for Ironworkers Local 7 in the State of Maine. I rise in favor of LD 1633 An Act to Require Responsible Contracting Practices for Public Construction Projects.

The People of the State of Maine deserve basic protections on the jobsite. Constituents have the right to good paying, high quality construction jobs that lead them into the trades they so choose. More than ever we need to invest in the next generation of trades people, not watch them leave for better paying positions out of the state. Maine needs to retain its young trades people in order to build an equitable future that is here not away. The infrastructure and future energy sources of our communities depend on it. The current contracting environment in Maine is not congruent with providing our youth with an entry into any decent paying job forget about a life long trade.

I was recently visiting a large job in central Maine where a major contractor had brought an employee in who had been injured so severely that the employee was completely unable to work. The employee was in a lawn chair for the entirety of the work week instead of home recuperating. This saved the employer from reporting a loss of time injury that would increase insurance premiums and decreased the chances of an onsite visit from OSHA. That's a good thing since the employer is already on a payment plan with OSHA and has racked up over \$32,000 worth of OSHA fines. These are fines from infractions where the employer was caught. Imagine what goes when unchecked.

Worse than the previous scenario employees of large contractors are misclassified as independent contractors and forced to carry their own workers compensation insurance. They however receive weekly checks from their employer, this is illegal. Of all the New England States Maine is the only state with no misclassification task force to combat the growing problem. Not to mention there is three prevailing wage enforcement officers in Maine and wage compliance is not their only job. Employees paid a low wage cannot afford their own workers compensation insurance and more commonly do not purchase it. Who then is left to pay the hospital bill when the employee is injured? Who will pay for that employee's family's food, healthcare, rent or mortgage? Why would the State allow unscrupulous contractors to treat employees in such a manner the right to bid work?

Maine is the second oldest state in the nation with a death rate that exceeds the birth rate. The youth of Maine are migrating to where they can earn a living, have health benefits, work towards a decent retirement and enjoy time with their family. Something has to be done in Maine, we are behind and the situation is not improving. Most of Ironworkers Local 7 members that live in the southern half of the state commute to Massachusetts daily. Others that live farther north stay down south during the week missing time at home with their families. Pay for those in the construction trades in Maine is so poor members can make more money staying in a hotel 4-5 nights a week and working in Massachusetts than working here at home. Meanwhile contractors in Maine routinely complain about skilled labor shortages as if it was a problem created by some unexplainable phenomena.

State Legislators on both sides of the isle are coming together and realizing the advantages that Prevailing Wage Laws and Project Labor Agreements bring to their constituents. At the last in person National Building Trades Legislative Conference in Washington DC. Two of the key note speakers were Montana Senator Steve Daines and Ohio's Speaker of the House Larry Householder. In both speeches the legislators echoed one another in the promotion of Prevailing Wage Laws and the protections Project Labor Agreements bring to the state. Householder was very strong in his support of Prevailing Wage Laws commenting that their implementation was one of the best means of getting families off public assistance.

This responsible contracting bill brings important issues to the forefront such as a registered apprenticeship programs used to train the work force of the future. Apprenticeship programs are easy to start and show a contractor's dedication to the next generation. We will all be in the hands of the next generation at some point in our lives it is our duty to see that they're successful. These people are our children and our neighbors children they are our future. Responsible contracting sets the bar of what us as Mainers expect from our contractors and businesses leaders in the community. We look to you as legislators to make a stand and back those without a voice. Mainers are out there working construction with no benefits, no hope of retirement and are living paycheck to paycheck. These members in our community are building our schools our bridges our energy infrastructure and its time they were paid them like the cornerstones of our community they are. I believe whole heartedly in this legislation. Please move this bill forward and let the House and Senate have the chance to make up their minds on what is fair to Maine's constituents.

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