



CREATING GOOD JOBS, A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT, AND A FAIR AND THRIVING ECONOMY

May 10, 2021

Re: LD 1656, An Act to Build Energy Efficient Affordable Housing

Dear Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing,

I respectfully submit comments in support of LD 1656, An Act to Build Energy Efficient Affordable Housing on behalf of the BlueGreen Alliance, a partnership of labor unions and environmental organizations both nationally and throughout the state of Maine. As the gap between working Americans and the rich grows wider and global temperatures continue to rise, Mainers are increasingly concerned about climate change and economic inequality. Both of these issues require bold and immediate action, but the solutions needed are as linked as the problems themselves. This bill will address three critical issues that we face: the housing shortage, lack of quality careers and the climate crisis.

By investing in the construction of energy-efficient affordable housing units in a way that also builds Maine's skilled labor workforce will mean more people making a good living and contributing to Maine's economy. In order to truly capture the full benefits and potential of housing investments, it is critical that homes are built by skilled workers who are paid family-sustaining wages, with project labor agreements in place, and utilize Maine recognized apprenticeship programs. An apprenticeship utilization standard requires a certain percentage of a project's workforce be enrolled in, or have graduated from, a certified apprenticeship program. Apprenticeship utilization can reduce the risk of cost overruns or substandard work due to poorly trained workers.

Project Labor Agreements provide comprehensive guidance and set mutual expectations for large projects. They are considered the gold standard of labor provisions by most building trades unions. There are tremendous local benefits to these agreements. Projects with PLA's in place attract and retain more skilled workers who do higher quality work and avoid delays and bid overruns, protect taxpayer money and ensure better project outcomes. Project Labor Agreements also open the door to domestic supply chain development. In the absence of domestic supply chain or local content requirements, developers will source and import component parts. By requiring projects to be constructed by Project Labor Act agreements, developers will have more opportunity to utilize components from deeper in the domestic supply chain for their projects.

Responsible construction of energy-efficient affordable housing is crucial to Maine's future. We urge your support for LD 1656.

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