

Michael Ouellet
Ouellet Construction

Testimony of Mike Ouellet Against LD 1656
An Act To Promote Energy-efficient Affordable Housing
Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing
May 10, 2021, 9:00 AM

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and Members of the Joint Standing Labor and Housing. My name is Mike Ouellet; I was born and raised in Maine and currently live in Cape Neddick.

My company, Ouellet Construction, is based in Brunswick. The company was initially founded in Madawaska in 1959 by my father, Albert. We are proud to have a third generation of my family working at our business. Our portfolio of work includes a wide variety of commercial buildings for both private and public customers.

Included in our construction services are housing projects, so I am providing testimony on this bill. I support the continued investment in affordable housing and see first-hand the urgency to complete projects to meet growing demand.

Keeping within my scope of work, I will only address Section one, Part one of the bill that contains a mandatory project labor agreement. My company is a close-knit group of employees, and we do not want to change the relationship that we have that would separate us culturally. Adding a project labor agreement to my company doesn't provide any added value to the employees. We already offer competitive pay and benefits, and during a prevailing wage project, we certainly don't have a challenge complying with the stipulated wage requirements.

So, I am asking the Committee, what value you believe a project labor agreement requirement offers? In my view, it will reduce competition, and it will cause significant market disruptions to business in your districts. Right now, it is challenging to source materials, find qualified subcontractors and meet deadlines. This policy doesn't assist workers, the marketplace, or my company.

If you support this measure and think this will benefit my team, you are wrong. It's doubtful it will increase their pay, and it reduces the return on their benefits. Because the work we perform is diverse, housing projects would become the last resort under the policy for us. That's unfortunate; we are good at what we do, we are based in Maine, and all of our employees live here.

Please hit the pause button and consider how this directly impacts your district's skilled workers and business.