

Jason Shedlock  
Laborers' International Union

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Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing. I am Jason J. Shedlock and I am a Regional Organizer for the Laborers' International Union of North America. I am also a Trustee and Executive Board Member of both the Maine AFL-CIO and the Southern Maine Labor Council and a resident of South Portland. I also serve on the Maine Apprenticeship Council as well as the State Workforce Board. I appear before you in support of LD 1656, "An Act to Promote Energy-efficient Affordable Housing."

My local union is over 300 strong in Maine, with access to thousands more across New England. The Laborers' International Union wholeheartedly supports this bill because we must not force our skilled craftspeople to build the very affordable housing that they will need to then turn around and live in because of depressed wages and a lack of labor standards. We support LD 1656's \$100M investment because it not only is necessary to address the widening affordable housing gap, but because it also speaks to the sustainability of our workforce and our environment.

This bill sets labor standards through the use of Project Labor Agreements, or PLAs. Make no mistake, by voting ought to pass on LD 1656, this Committee will be sending a clear message that when we spend public dollars on affordable housing in this state, the women and men who build it will no longer be an afterthought. Through PLAs, by partnering with building trades unions such as the Laborers, we ensure that workers are paid fairly, trained well, earn health care benefits, and, after an honest career, have an even shot at retiring with dignity. PLA's incorporate registered apprenticeship programs so that we are training Maine's future builders. They also can include targets for traditionally-underserved populations such as women and people of color. There are also programs for returning veterans. PLAs are crafted in partnership with contractors and labor organizations to fit the needs of the specific project and the specific community.

PLA's are pre-job agreements that set the standards, expectations and rules for a specific project and that project only. To be clear: any contractor (union or non-union) can bid, win and perform on a project under a PLA. This is a fact no matter who says otherwise and how it's spun. True, any contractors must agree to treat the workers on that project fairly and play by the pre-established rules. But in fairness, that really should not be a lot to ask. And if a specific contractor, association, or even developer protests against labor standards; one must ask the question, Why? Why should we not get to yes when it comes to empowering our workers, given that we are injecting \$100M of taxpayer money into affordable housing - and in turn these workers are injecting part of their paychecks into their local economies? We can no longer accept "No" as a strategy to address issues of inequity. This bill gets to yes by addressing three major issues in Maine: our affordable housing shortage, our climate crisis and our skilled workforce shortage.

The Laborers' union stands ready to address Maine's needs when it comes to building the future and doing so in a sustainable way. LD 1656 goes a long way in setting the rules of the game on workforces standards while addressing the key needs of affordable housing and environmental stewardship. I urge you to vote ought to pass. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

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