

Jason Shedlock  
Laborers' International Union and Maine Building & Construction Trades Council  
LD 177

March 8, 2022

Good morning Senator Daughtry, 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 and President of the Maine State Building & Construction Trades Council. I am also a Trustee and Executive Board Member of both the Maine AFL-CIO and the Southern Maine Labor Council as well as serve on the Maine Apprenticeship Council and the State Workforce Board. I appear before you in support of LD 177, "An Act To Improve Labor Laws in Maine." Thank you to Representative Cuddy for his work in finding a straightforward solution to a growing need in our state.

I would like to start out by sharing a bit of a personal perspective. I have had the privilege to testify in front of many bodies of decision makers in my career: the US congress, state houses, county commissions and city and town councils across the country. I always hope for and try for a unanimous vote up or down on behalf of working families. I also know that's a rarity. Committee members, I am confident the LD 177 is one of those unicorns as they say - a bill where both sides of the aisle can agree that registered apprenticeship isn't a partisan issue but a human issue.

As I mentioned, I sit on the Maine Apprenticeship Council, honored to have been appointed by Governor Mills. On it, I approve union and non-union registered apprenticeships every week. The Maine Apprenticeship Office's excellent staff sends us a list of new applicants every Wednesday in fact, for us to review. And if they meet the standards set, we recommend approval. And if approved, these registered apprenticeships then qualify for state reimbursement for training their apprentices. Herein lies the issue that LD 177 is trying to solve. The state of Maine used to reimburse the program sponsor - a small business training an apprentice for example - up to \$1,200 a year for the duration of their apprenticeship - typically between 2-4 years. This defrays the significant investment the business or Joint Apprenticeship Training Council puts forth to train up their new hire.

A few years ago, that reimbursement rate inexplicably plummeted to a one-time \$500 reimbursement for each apprentice. We were told that was because of the proliferation of the number of registered apprentices - a victim of the program's success perhaps. For whatever reason, the plain fact is that token dollar amount is not nearly enough to help defray the cost of implementing an apprenticeship program for a small business or a JATC. Further, it does not match the tremendous focus that Governor Mills, Commissioner Fortman and their highly professional staff has placed on this tried and true workforce development model. LD 177 is a true bipartisan step in the right direction to fix this issue so that all registered apprentices - union and non union in all fields, can access meaningful reimbursement rates in order to train Maine's workforce of the future.

Thank you for your time this morning, and I stand ready to answer any question you might have.

Jason J. Shedlock  
Regional Organizer, Laborers' International Union of North America  
President, Maine State Building & Construction Trades Council  
jshedlock@lnerof.org  
(207) 317-1447

Resident: South Portland, Maine