

Grant Provost  
Brunswick  
LD 1539

LD 1539: An Act to Promote a Diverse, More Experienced Construction Workforce and Ensure High-quality Careers by Increasing Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Good Morning Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Labor and Housing Committee. My name is Grant Provost, I am the Business Agent for Ironworkers Local 7 and a member of the AFL- CIO Executive Board. I come before you in support of LD 1539: An Act to Promote a Diverse, More Experienced Construction Workforce and Ensure High-quality Careers by Increasing Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

When I was in high school, I had no idea what a Registered Apprenticeship Program was, how to apply for one or how they were run. I had no knowledge of any alternative to a 4-year college degree or what programs existed for high school graduates whom wouldn't be moving on for more socially expected education. The year I graduated I joined the Ironworkers, I started working that summer and was enrolled into their 4 year registered apprenticeship program. Not knowing what an opportunity had presented itself to me I felt as though I was less than and was still planning to move on. I worked hard and did well as I learned the trade, I enjoyed the time outside, the comradery and the change of scenery. After each job was completed a new one in a new location in Maine would begin. As my skill level matured so did my pay and as I entered into my first year of apprenticeship I learned a vast amount of applicable information about the trade which helped me in the field. I was able to work 40 hours a week or more and still attend school at no cost to myself.

24 years later I set before you miles ahead of the majority of my schoolmates. My annuity is substantial, I have been able to bank up to almost 30 pension credits, I have a beautiful family, live in an amazing home in Brunswick and see a dignified retirement on the horizon. I watch as my friends and ex-classmates struggle with mountains of debt still left 20 years after their college graduation dates and I am thankful to have such a successful path laid before me by the Ironworkers high quality apprenticeship program.

This bill sets up all Mainers who are lucky enough to find themselves in one of Maine's many high quality Registered Apprenticeship Programs. To demand high standards for all apprenticeship programs who receive State Funding is an important step to ensuring Mainers that do not fit the 4 year college mold can succeed. Instead of dragging down high-quality apprenticeship programs such as the one I attended by letting low paying and short-term programs be funded with taxpayer dollars. Let us say we expect better for Mainers by raising the standards of the apprenticeship programs we do fund. Let us set a higher minimum amount of time for the apprentices to learn about each trade or career they choose! Let us improve our diversity, equity and inclusion by rewarding apprenticeship programs that represent Maine's minority populations. From new Mainers trying to find a foothold here and participate in our local economy, to residents that have been in the State we call Maine for more than a millennium. We need to lift up and not hold down our apprenticeship standards and that is why I rise in favor of this bill. I respectfully encourage the committee to vote out to pass.