

Kathie Leonard
Auburn Manufacturing Inc.

Testimony in Support of LD 1411
An Act to Establish the Maine Buy American and Build Maine Act
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My name is Kathie Leonard, and I am the President/CEO of Auburn Manufacturing, Inc. (AMI), located in Mechanic Falls and Auburn, Maine. AMI and its 50 employees produce textiles used by industrial and institutional facilities throughout the US and beyond to save energy and to protect from extreme heat and fire. Our insulation kits are used in institutional heating systems, and our fire blankets and curtains are used to protect facilities during hot work, like welding operations, common in many construction projects.

Our products are widely used by the US Navy for mechanical insulation and hot work protection in all Naval Shipyards. In order to be eligible for such contracts, suppliers must meet the Buy American Act and the Berry Amendment. These federal requirements assure that our military can obtain critical safety items that meet their stringent specifications on a consistent basis. Without such requirements as the Buy American Act, manufacturers like us would have been irreparably harmed, and US defense systems compromised. Last year's debacle surrounding PPE imports demonstrates the importance of supporting US manufacturing to protect the American people.

If enacted, LD 1411 will help to build upon the Buy American Act by requiring contractors to buy US products for Maine projects funded by taxpayers. This legislation is in sync with President Biden's Buy American Executive Order issued earlier this year.

Without such requirements, we run the risk of spending taxpayer money for imports of unknown origin, including countries like China, with centralized governments. Our own Anti-Dumping case against China in 2016 for silica fabrics documented an almost 70% government subsidy on such products. With an advantage like that, it is clear why the US industrial base has been hollowed out over the past two decades.

Therefore, we see this legislation as a further rebuilding effort of the Buy American Act, essential to our national security and to those who are part of that US workforce here in Maine.