

## **The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony to Support LD 532**

### **“Resolve, Directing Professional Licensing and Certification Boards To Study the Barriers To Obtaining Professional Licensure and Certification”**

Senator Herbig, Representative Larsen-Daughtry, and distinguished members of the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Jacob Posik and I serve as the director of communications at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 532.

Occupational licensing exists as a mechanism for government to promote public health and safety by requiring workers to meet specific requirements before legally practicing in occupations that pose risks to consumers and the general public. Licensing can be useful when imposed on occupations that do pose legitimate health and safety risks to the public. Over time, however, rates of occupational licensing have grown tremendously, and many states – including Maine – now license a number of professions that pose no threat to the public. In the 1950s, only five percent of US occupations were subject to licensing requirements. Today, nearly one-third of the American workforce requires a license to earn a living.<sup>1</sup>

Occupational licensing is not a left vs. right issue; the overwhelming consensus of scholarly research is that – unless imposed with extraordinary parsimony and care – occupational licensing deters people from entering regulated professions, raises prices for goods and services and does little to enhance public safety. A 2015 study prepared by the Obama Administration’s Department of the Treasury, Council of Economic Advisors, and Department of Labor found that, “while licensing can bring benefits, current systems of licensure can also place burdens on workers, employers, and consumers, and too often are inconsistent, inefficient, and arbitrary.”<sup>2</sup>

Consider that a barber in New England could pay as much as \$164 to obtain a license in Massachusetts, but the same license costs only \$41 in Maine. The Massachusetts license requires 779 days of education and experience, but in New Hampshire it takes only 187. In Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, you’ll also need to pass three exams to earn this license, but in Connecticut you’re only required to pass one.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ij.org/report/license-to-work/introduction/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/licensing\\_report\\_final\\_nonembargo.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/licensing_report_final_nonembargo.pdf).

In Maine, to be a log scaler – someone who measures and estimates the value of logs – you must acquire 730 days of relevant experience before being issued a license. Emergency Medical Technicians, whose work undoubtedly impacts the health and safety of the general public, require just 26 days of relevant experience to earn a license. It should also be noted that Maine is only one of two states (including Idaho) that licenses log scalers. Maine licenses at least seven occupations that are licensed in seven or fewer states, including arborists, animal control officers, dietetic technicians, electrical helpers, funeral attendants, log scalers and packagers.

According to the Institute for Justice, Maine licenses 45 out of 102 low- to moderate-income professions, including makeup artists, funeral attendants, auctioneers and sign language interpreters, among many others. Those seeking to enter these occupations must, on average, pay \$181 in fees, devote 298 days to training, and pass one exam just to obtain a license to work in Maine.

In 2018, I wrote a report titled *Let Us Work* that has been attached to this testimony. I spent hours scouring Maine laws and rules to put together a database of every occupational license I could find, which can be found at the back of the report. In total, I found more than 160 licensed occupations; the last such statewide review I could find was performed in 2007 by the Reason Foundation, which found 134.

The Maine Heritage Policy Center fully supports an expansive and thorough review of the barriers to entry within Maine’s hundreds of occupational licensing regimes, including barriers to issuing reciprocal licenses, which we believe is a major deterrent to attracting qualified workers to our state.

We strongly urge the committee to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 532. Thank you.