

The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony to Support LD 890

"An Act To Expand Workforce Access by Creating Apprenticeship Programs To Increase Access to Licensure in Certain Occupations"

Senator Herbig, Representative Daughtry and distinguished member of the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Adam Crepeau. I am a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 890.

While The Maine Heritage Policy Center would prefer to eliminate licensing requirements for occupations that do not concern the health and safety of the public, we support this bill because it would provide another avenue for fulfilling those requirements. LD 890 would expand the use of apprenticeship programs as an alternative means for fulfilling licensing requirements. These apprenticeships would be approved by the Maine Department of Labor or the United States Department of Labor. An examination administered by the Office of Professional and Financial Regulation would still be required to demonstrate each candidate's knowledge of the profession. Since this bill is a concept draft, it is unclear which occupations would be covered but it is a step in the right direction nonetheless.

The benefits of apprenticeship programs are clear - they encourage individuals to learn on the job and receive commensurate pay as they gain experience in their fields. Maine currently imposes licensing requirements for more than 160 occupations in the state.¹ These requirements often serve as a barrier to entry due to the cost of obtaining a license and the education requirements necessary to be eligible. For example, becoming a funeral practitioner requires that individuals have a minimum of an associate's degree from a college of mortuary science.² People that want to practice in this profession already have to spend 2,000 hours within one year as a practitioner trainee under someone who is licensed. Removing or replacing education and experience requirements in favor of apprenticeships would be beneficial for all Mainers.

Licensing requirements that do not serve to protect the health and safety of the public are often created to protect current practitioners from increased competition. This results in reduced quality in some licensed professions and increases the price of goods and services overall.³ In

¹ <https://mainepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/LetUsWorkFinal.pdf>

² <https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/02/331/331c-all.doc>

³ <https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/apprenticeships-useful-alternative-tough-implement>;

<https://mainepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/LetUsWorkFinal.pdf>;

<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/blogs/competition-matters/2017/11/what-do-we-know-about-effects-occupational-licensing>

addition, research shows that 91 percent of apprentices find employment after their program has been completed.⁴ If individuals are able to earn a paycheck while receiving hands-on experience in their trade, they will be more likely to pursue their goals in Maine. This legislation would create an avenue to employment rather than a barrier to entry.

Because LD 890 would provide Mainers with a less costly pathway to obtaining an occupational license, The Maine Heritage Policy Center urges the committee to vote, “Ought to Pass” on LD 890. Thank you.

⁴ <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED572260>