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## **An Act To Expand and Improve Employment Opportunities in the State**

### **CONCEPT DRAFT SUMMARY**

This bill is a concept draft pursuant to Joint Rule 208.

This bill proposes to expand and improve the Maine Apprenticeship Program under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 26, section 3202 by expanding and improving outreach programs to recruit new employers and educate employers regarding apprenticeship, the occupations that are eligible for apprenticeship and how to participate in or establish an apprenticeship program. It also proposes to expand and improve outreach programs to educate providers of services for unemployed workers, new workers, including recent high school graduates, workers returning to the workforce and veterans regarding apprenticeship and to educate high school students regarding preapprenticeship opportunities.

It proposes to expand the State's support for laid-off workers by ensuring adequate staffing in the Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services.

It also proposes to establish a stakeholder group to examine best practices regarding layoff aversion and to propose a comprehensive strategy to prevent layoffs. The stakeholder group would include representatives of labor, business, service providers, laid-off workers and government agencies and would examine and report on subjects including, but not limited to:

1. Best practices from other states with programs to prevent layoffs;
2. Early warning networks that identify and monitor firms, industries and communities that may be vulnerable to mass layoffs or business closures;
3. Strategies for early economic development assistance, including ways to efficiently match firms in or near distress with economic development agencies that provide grants, loans or technical assistance such as workforce training, product development or development of new assembly or production processes;
4. Buy-out options, including competitor buyout and employee buyout, and a review of existing law relating to buy-out options to determine whether changes should be made to facilitate buyouts and prevent layoffs;
5. Strategies to strengthen sectors of the economy through cooperation between stakeholders in a specific industry in areas such as workforce development; and
6. Alternatives to layoffs, including work sharing, worker training, modernization and equipment upgrades, financial restructuring, succession plans and conversion to new products.