

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

Amend the bill by striking out everything after the enacting clause and before the summary and inserting the following:

‘**Sec. 1. 26 MRSA c. 25, sub-c. 6** is enacted to read:

SUBCHAPTER 6

PUT ME TO WORK PROGRAM

§ 2041. Put ME to Work Program

1. Establishment; purpose. The Put ME to Work Program, referred to in this section as "the program," is established within the Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services, referred to in this section as "the bureau," and the State Workforce Investment Board. The program must facilitate the establishment of job training programs in this State by working with private employers, adult education providers and postsecondary education institutions. The job training programs in the program must provide training to prepare workers for jobs in high-demand fields.

2. Training criteria for fewer than 5 workers for a single employer or 2 employers. The bureau shall work with private employers and industry sector partners to determine the demand for jobs and the skills needed for those jobs and with adult education, training providers and postsecondary education institutions to provide the appropriate education and training. A single employer applicant or 2 employers training fewer than 5 persons are eligible to use the program if the training program meets the following criteria:

A. Training is for prospective, new hire or incumbent workers. Prospective worker trainees must be guaranteed a job interview with at least one of the participating employers upon meeting the pretraining qualifications and the successful completion of training;

B. The employer or employers work with career centers within the bureau to select, hire and train individuals from a pool of qualified candidates for employment as full-time regular employees at the end of training;

C. The job training program must provide education or training for employment in a trade or industry with a significant demand for skilled labor, either statewide or in a region in this State, that has been identified by the Center for Workforce Research and Information within the Department of Labor as providing employment for high-compensation jobs or in an industry in which technology or work practices have significantly changed to require training to assist new workers to acquire needed skills or incumbent workers to remain current and competitive;

D. The participating employers agree to hire persons who successfully complete the job training program at a post-training wage of at least \$2.50 per hour more than the minimum hourly wage rate as set in state law and to provide successful incumbent worker trainees with an increase in the hourly wage to meet or exceed the median wage for that occupation in this State as identified by the Center for Workforce Research and Information within the Department of Labor; and

E. A person who successfully completes the job training program must be awarded a certificate, degree or similar credential that is universally recognized by the employer's trade association or industry.

The bureau shall leverage existing workforce funds and training programs and providers to assist employers in providing training. Priority for funding must be given to employers that contribute at least a 50% or higher in-kind or direct training cost match.

3. Industry partnership criteria. The bureau shall work with an industry partnership to determine the demand for jobs and the skills needed for those jobs and with adult education, training providers and postsecondary education institutions to develop or provide the appropriate education and training. For purposes of this subsection, one or more employers providing training for 5 or more workers, or a recognized trade association or industry convener, is considered an industry partnership under the program. The following criteria apply.

A. Training must be for prospective, new hire or incumbent workers. Prospective worker trainees must be guaranteed a job interview with at least one of the participating employers upon meeting the pretraining qualifications and the successful completion of training.

B. The employer or employers shall work with career centers within the bureau to select, hire and train individuals from a pool of qualified candidates for employment as full-time regular employees at the end of training.

C. The job training program must provide education or training for employment in a trade or industry with a significant demand for skilled labor, either statewide or in a region in this State, that has been identified by the Center for Workforce Research and Information within the Department of Labor as providing employment for high-compensation jobs or in an industry where technology or work practices have significantly changed to require training to assist new workers to acquire needed skills or incumbent workers to remain current and competitive.

D. The participating employers must agree to hire persons who successfully complete the job training program at a post-training wage of at least \$2.50 per hour more than the minimum hourly wage rate as set in state law and to provide successful incumbent worker trainees with an increase in the hourly wage to meet or exceed the median wage for that occupation in this State as identified by the Center for Workforce Research and Information within the Department of Labor.

E. A person who successfully completes the job training program must be awarded a certificate, degree or similar credential that is universally recognized by the trade association or industry.

The bureau shall leverage existing workforce funds and training programs and providers to assist employers in providing training.

Priority for funding must be given to employers or industry partnerships that contribute at least a 50% or higher in-kind or direct training cost match and provide evidence of at least 2 of the following criteria: provision of fringe benefits; ongoing skill development or access to career pathways; an increase in the number of net new hires as a result of training; positive economic effects on the local or regional economy; short-term and long-term leveraging of other resources; training of individuals who have historically faced barriers to employment and individuals who are unemployed or underemployed; return on investment for the State, region, industry and trainees; and other factors described in the state workforce development plan of the State Workforce Investment Board.

4. Administration. The program is administered jointly by the Department of Labor and the State Workforce Investment Board under rules and operating procedures adopted by the Commissioner of Labor and the State Workforce Investment Board. Administrative costs are limited to 5% of program funds.

5. Review of proposals. An application for funding under the program for job training as described in subsection 2 must be reviewed on an as-needed basis by a review team made up of the program director of the bureau, the director of the bureau and the director of the State Workforce Investment Board. Awards must be prioritized using available funding. The review team, at its discretion, may deny an application and connect applicants to an alternative funding source if available or recommend an alternative industry partnership structure.

Proposals meeting the industry partnership criteria described in subsection 3 must be reviewed by the State Workforce Investment Board. Voting members of the State Workforce Investment Board must rank competing proposals by the criteria in subsection 3, with available funding taken into consideration when determining final awards so as to maximize training for the most individuals and return on investment.

The State Workforce Investment Board, at its discretion, may deny an application and connect applicants to an alternative funding source if available or recommend an alternative industry partnership structure.

6. Eligibility for funding. Applicants eligible to receive funding from the program include, but are not limited to, employers, regional and local economic development agencies or partnerships, community-based organizations, job training service providers, registered apprenticeship service providers, local adult education providers and postsecondary education institutions.

7. Training. Training provided under this section is considered approved training under the unemployment insurance laws and the laws regarding dislocated workers administered by the Department of Labor.

Training funds authorized under this section must be paid to the employer or training provider on a reimbursement basis.

Denied applicants may reapply in the following fiscal year.

8. Report. For any year in which the program is funded, the Commissioner of Labor and the director of the State Workforce Investment Board shall provide to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over labor, commerce, research and economic development matters a report by March 1st of the following year, which must include, for each business assisted under this subchapter, the name and location of the business, the number of individuals trained or retrained, the dollar amount expended and, when applicable, the number of new jobs created.

9. Rules. Rules adopted pursuant to this subchapter are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

10. Nonlapsing funds. Any unencumbered balance of General Fund appropriations remaining at the end of each fiscal year in the program may not lapse but must be carried forward to be used for the same purposes.

Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

LABOR, DEPARTMENT OF

State Workforce Investment Board Z158

Initiative: Provides funds to be used to match funding or in-kind contributions by businesses participating in the Put ME to Work Program.

GENERAL FUND	2015-16	2016-17
All Other	\$475,000	\$712,500
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GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$475,000	\$712,500

State Workforce Investment Board Z158

Initiative: Provides funds to support a portion of the cost of one Labor Program Specialist position to manage the Put ME to Work Program.

GENERAL FUND	2015-16	2016-17
Personal Services	\$25,000	\$37,500
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GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$25,000	\$37,500

LABOR, DEPARTMENT OF		
DEPARTMENT TOTALS	2015-16	2016-17
GENERAL FUND	\$500,000	\$750,000
DEPARTMENT TOTAL - ALL FUNDS	\$500,000	\$750,000

SUMMARY

This amendment, which is the minority report of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development, strikes the bill and replaces it with a workforce training program to be administered jointly by the Department of Labor and the State Workforce Investment Board.

The amendment replaces the requirement in the bill that participating businesses provide at least 50% of the cost of the program with a preference for such businesses when granting applications. Additionally, for industry partnership applicants, 7 factors are also taken into account when reviewing applications.

The amendment requires participating employers to hire trainees at a rate at least \$2.50 per hour more than the state-mandated minimum hourly wage rate and to pay incumbent worker trainees with an hourly wage that meets or exceeds the median wage for that occupation as identified by the Center for Workforce Research and Information within the Department of Labor.

The amendment eliminates the \$100,000 funding per fiscal year in the bill for the Industry Partnership Assistance Collaborative and the \$900,000 per fiscal year funding in the bill for the Maine Community College System's Maine Quality Centers. Funding is instead directed to the State Workforce Investment Board at a level of \$500,000 in the first fiscal year and \$750,000 in the 2nd fiscal year. This funding is to be used to match contributions of participating businesses and to support a portion of the cost of one Labor Program Specialist position to manage the Put ME to Work Program.

FISCAL NOTE REQUIRED

(See attached)