

Testimony of KV Connect Central Maine's Young Professional's Group in support of:

*LD 258 An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025*

February 10, 2023

Dear Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement & Business:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of LD 258 and the proposed funding for the Realize Maine Network. For the last five years I have served as a member of KV Connect, a partner in the Realize Maine Network of the Maine Development Foundation. Thanks to KV Connect I have had the opportunity to serve in multiple leadership capacities, hone my professional networking skills, build on my career, and been connected to job opportunities that have kept me in Maine. This year I also received a scholarship to participate in MDF's Leadership Maine program. This program has provided me an opportunity, as an emerging leader in Maine, to learn about industries and businesses in nearly every corner of our state, and grow my professional network beyond Central Maine.

The mission of KV Connect, similar to others in the Realize Maine Network, is to positively impact our community through economic, social, political and community service initiatives. Our initiatives seek to help retain young talent in Central Maine by connecting young professionals to the many community resources and networking opportunities.

Each year the grant funds that KV Connect receives from Realize Maine hosts a variety of events to showcase area businesses, networking opportunities for Young Professionals, professional development scholarships for Young Professionals, and fundraising opportunities to support local nonprofits. In 2021-2022, KV Connect was also able to engage new members in subcommittees and our Steering Committee, host "Welcome Home" event in collaboration with Live + Work in Maine, events that showcase our outdoor recreation opportunities, and offer professional development opportunities. In addition to the hundreds of young professionals across Central Maine that we reach through our events, we provided \$800 in professional development scholarships to young professionals to attend local professional development opportunities.

Each year we collaborate with a variety of groups to support their work in the community. Our key partners are the Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Skowhegan. Additionally in 2021-2022 we collaborated with the Alford Youth and Community Center's Unified Sports program, Champion's Fitness Club, Waterville Creates!, Downtown Waterville Farmers Market, Live + Work in Maine, Dirigo Labs, United Way of Kennebec Valley, Waterville Rotary, Bigelow Brewing, and Soul Revival (a new young professional-owned business in Waterville).

In addition to our yearly schedule of KV Connect events, our organization was selected to host this year's Magnetize Maine conference in Downtown Waterville thanks to an additional Realize Maine grant. Magnetize this year featured over a dozen speakers and topics from manufacturing and agriculture to serving on a board and professional communication. This event welcomed 120 people from across the state to Downtown Waterville. Beyond the professional development impact for attendees, our committee

also received positive feedback from local businesses because many attendees choose to stop to visit and shop at many downtown businesses.

This short letter barely scratches the surface of the wonderful work that the Maine Development Foundation does throughout our state to help young professionals, business leaders, and boomerangs like me advance and build our careers in Maine. Thank you for your consideration in continuing this important funding and the work of Maine Development Foundation, Realize Maine, and KV Connect to promote area businesses, outdoor recreation opportunities, workforce development, and community resources that make our region a great place to live and work.

Samantha Burdick  
KV Connect  
Past Chair