



**Testimony to the Joint Standing Committees on
Appropriations and Financial Affairs & Innovation,
Development, Economic Advancement and Business**

L.D. 258 - In Support of Maine Development Foundation Funding

February 9, 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,

My name is Mark Levasseur, Chair of the Steering Committee for Momentum Aroostook, a program under the Realize Maine Network funded by the Maine Development Foundation. Momentum Aroostook is a young professional's networking group in Aroostook County helping to shape Maine's next generation of leadership, mentor, attract and retain young professionals in Northern Maine. I would like to extend my appreciation for allowing us to testify in support of MDF's appropriation.

Our steering committee consists of 13 members with a broad range of career paths and our reach spans from Fort Kent to Houlton with constant interaction between community members to accomplish our mission. Volunteer based, we all serve as part of this committee to attribute a bond with our community to the strong foundation that Momentum Aroostook helps foster.

We have gathered support from long-standing organizations like MMG Insurance, Katahdin Trust Company, Northern Maine Development Commission, Farm Credit East and most importantly, the Aroostook Partnership – a collaborative group of businesses in the region. Through a partnership with AP, we aim to bring more appointed potential youth leaders on-board with Momentum Aroostook to create targeted leadership opportunities and build our core membership group. We are proud to build leadership skills and confidence for young professionals during this significant demographic shift in Maine's aging workforce. Our organization is also partnering again with Young Professionals Institute, a University of Maine leadership development program. This partnership is key to our mission and success in Aroostook County to retain young local leaders who want to make an impact in Northern Maine. We are excited to continue our work and ensure that our County can meet the growing need for leaders in the next decade.

Without the continued funding from the Realize Maine Network through Maine Development Foundation, our goal and mission would be difficult to achieve. The funding allows Momentum to host quarterly networking socials, host outings and professional development opportunities and most importantly, our annual Aroostook Achievers Awards. We successfully held our third annual event, recognizing 15 individuals in five categories for their work and dedication to their work professions here in Aroostook County. An event that draws in a crowd of almost 200 people to show their support for these emerging leaders. In addition, funds from MDF will be used this August as we host Magnetize Maine in Aroostook County. Our goal will be to highlight the workforce development initiatives in Northern Maine along with showcase what Aroostook County has to offer through a panel discussion conference. Momentum will also be hosting a social hour and welcome event for the young professionals to gather and network. Momentum Aroostook would greatly appreciate your consideration for funding so we can keep the momentum going in Northern Maine and help our young professionals remain as an asset up here.

Sincerely,

Mark Levasseur
MMG Insurance
Chair, Momentum Aroostook