



February 14, 2023

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

L.D. 221- In Support of Maine Development Foundation Funding

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,

I am writing on behalf of the Steering Committee of FUSION:Bangor a young professional's organization under the Realize Maine Network, which is funded by the Maine Development Foundation. FUSION:Bangor was founded in 2005 and is a program of the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce.

FUSION:Bangor is the area's networking group of engaged young professionals. The organization works to connect the residents of the area to each other, engage with the community and transform the Bangor region into the preferred place to live, work and play in Maine.

Since 2005, FUSION has played an instrumental role in shaping the Bangor region into a vital place for young professionals. It regularly offers social, civic, volunteer and professional opportunities for community members, and plays an active role in collaborating with local businesses and organizations.

We have been fortunate to collaborate with regional businesses, educational institutions and the members of the Realize Maine Network. We strive to connect new residents to business, community, and social networks through the various events we offer. In November of 2022, FUSION held a summit that brought 150 community, education and business members to discuss Social Equity Impact, Community Engagement and Partnerships and Education and Workforce Development. This event was highly regarded in our community, and we anticipate another event in 2023.

Without continued funding and support from the Realize Maine Network, our goal of connecting and retaining our young leaders would be incredibly challenging.

On behalf of FUSION: Bangor, we thank you for your continued support in building community, knowledge and leaders in our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Pereira", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Victoria Pereira
FUSION: Bangor
Steering Committee Chair