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To: The Honorable Senator Anne Beebe-Center
The Honorable Representative Suzanne Salisbury
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

From: Kim Moore, Director of the Bureau of Employment Services, Maine Department of Labor

Date: May 9, 2023

Re: LD 931, An Act to Expand the State's Workforce by Supporting the Transition from Incarceration to Employment

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, I am writing to provide information regarding the current work being done by the MDOL Bureau of Employment Services (BES) in the reentry space, in relation to LD 931, An Act to Expand the State's Workforce by Supporting the Transition from Incarceration to Employment.

MDOL Bureau of Employment Services (BES) Career Consultants regularly provide on-site CareerCenter services and resources needed for a successful transition including help with resumes and cover letters, job search techniques and interviewing skills customized for individuals with a justice-involved history, connection to training programs and supportive programs, etc. at locations including the Bath Community Recovery Center, Travis Collins House, Windham Correctional Center, Recovery Connections of Maine, Somerset County Jail, Mountainview Correctional Facility, etc. In addition, staff provide employment services at the probation offices in Waterville and Augusta as individuals on probation make their regular visits with their probation officers, with services being expanded to youth on probation. The Augusta CareerCenter is also a key partner in Kennebec County Jail's CARA (Criminogenic Addiction & Recovery Academy) program. CareerCenter staff lead Workforce Connections sessions 5-7 times during the ten-week program and cover employment-related topics from preparing for a job search through interviewing skills, mock interview sessions, and follow-up. CareerCenter staff introduce residents to partner agencies and supporting community resources to assist in their transition from jail to the community.

Correction liaisons (vocational rehabilitation counselors) have been assigned to both County and State jails through our MDOL Bureau of Rehabilitative Service (BRS) with services for individuals with disabilities beginning 3 months prior to release. These liaisons work with reentry staff and resident to identify community needs and services, coordinate with community case managers and probation for ongoing planning, and assist with community referrals including housing, medical, and medical health services. BRS also partners with the MDOL Bureau of Employment Services (BES) to coordinate re-entry planning, which includes delivery of career exploration workshop (Women's Reentry Center), and dedicated re-entry planning for Veteran's with BES Veteran Services (both County and State).

Lastly, MDOL administers federal WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) programs which target services to individuals re-entering from incarceration and those in recovery. Service providers for these programs employ peer support workers- those with lived experience and knowledge of the scope of services available in the community in which the individual resides. These workers have established strong statewide connections with

organizations and agencies including the Maine Prisoner Reentry Network (MPRN), Intensive Case Managers for the jails, Maine Recovery Advocacy Project (ME-RAP), the Treatment Court Steering Committee, Maine Pretrial Services, and recovery centers through the Recovery HUB. WIOA programs and staff help individuals with career, employment, and training services including paid on the job training opportunities and work experiences that permit the transitioning individual to try-out employment within a specific industry or occupation and offers the employer an opportunity to assess the individual as a prospective employee at no cost to the employer. Supports include tuition and related costs like tools and equipment associated with occupational education and training programs, transportation and childcare, dental care, work-related uniforms and clothing, digital literacy skills, and career coaching including guidance on discussing criminal background and long absences from the workplace with prospective employers. Staff also work with employers, providing education on the value of a job to individuals in recovery and the benefits of providing a second chance- highlighting the success employers have had in employing individuals in reentry and recovery.

For more information, please visit our jobseeker resource guide for specific resources for individuals in recovery/reentry: <https://www.maine.gov/labor/careerctr/docs/2021/JobSeekerGuide.pdf> or contact Kim Moore (Kimberley.Moore@maine.gov) for a direct connection to your local CareerCenter team.

The Maine Department of Labor is committed to serving Maine workers and businesses by helping employers recruit and train a talented workforce, providing workers with skills needed to compete in our economy, assisting individuals when jobs are lost, aiding people with disabilities reach career goals, ensuring safe and fair workplaces for people on the job and providing research and analysis of employment data to support job growth.