



PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF LD 262

January 16, 2024

An Act to Strengthen Maine's Workforce

Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business

**Submitted by Michael McKernan, Director, Government and Community Relations,
The Jackson Laboratory**

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Michael McKernan. I am Director of Government and Community Relations at The Jackson Laboratory (JAX) and a resident of Bar Harbor. I am also a board member of the Maine Development Foundation (MDF). Today, I'm here in my professional capacity, representing The Jackson Laboratory, to testify in **support of LD 262**, an act to strengthen Maine's workforce.

JAX is a driver of significant innovation and statewide economic development. The JAX R&D mission employs 1,759 people in Maine, from over 140 towns and 15 counties. In 2022, JAX paid \$60 million to almost 600 Maine businesses and sole providers of goods and services, including equipment manufacturers, building contractors, engineers, hoteliers and makers of wood pellets from our forest products industry.

We routinely appear before this committee and others to support state investments that advance the goals of Maine's 10-year economic development plan, including R&D and education. For this reason, JAX supports LD 262 because it is a smart, forward-looking investment into MDF, a non-partisan organization with a clear track record of success serving businesses and communities through trusted research, leadership development and creative partnerships. JAX colleagues benefit from MDF's outstanding leadership development programs, we rely on their analyses reflected in the Measures of Growth, and we observe their success in working across many economic sectors, which is a unique attribute of MDF.

MDF has garnered statewide support, including JAX, and I'm pleased to introduce alongside this testimony a letter from members of the MDF Champions Circle offering three specific examples of how MDF has been able to *catalyze and meet the moment in the Maine economy*:

- *FOR/Maine – where MDF's unique ability to help bring industry, community, and educational and research assets to the same table has helped ravaged communities stabilize and start rebuilding, and helped the forest products sector attract more than \$1 billion in new capital investment.*
- *Maine Downtown Center – where MDF is working with dozens of communities to reuse historic buildings, and attract and retain small businesses, with an investment multiplier of more than*

20:1, turning \$25,000 from the State General Fund into more than \$1 million in community support in 2023.

- *Maine Adult Promise and Maine Spark – where MDF is helping dozens of collaborating organizations and hundreds of navigators who assist adult learners in pursuit of credentials and upskilling, to build better, more effective systems to reach thousands more workers.*

This letter seeks to remind this committee of the state's 1977 commitment to match private sector investment in the MDF, up to \$250,000 per year. The private sector has delivered on that promise year on year. The letter concludes: *"We urge the state to step forward and reinvest in its creation again to help even more Maine workers, businesses and communities prosper."*

The letter is signed by Bob Montgomery-Rice, President and CEO, Bangor Savings Bank; Michael Bourque, CEO, MEMIC; S. Catherine Longley, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, The Jackson Laboratory; James Herbert, President, University of New England; and Deborah Ellwood, President and CEO, Maine Community Foundation; and Matt McHatten, President and CEO, MMG Insurance.

LD 262 is a long-term investment into the MDF, for whom the economic interests of Maine people are its number-one priority. The Jackson Laboratory urges this committee to vote LD 262 as "ought to pass."