



DATE: March 12, 2024
TO: Joint Standing Committee on State & Local Government
FROM: Samantha Warren, UMS Director of Government & Community Relations
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RE: **LD 2241, An Act to Eliminate Inactive Boards and Commissions**

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government: My name is Samantha Warren and I am the Director of Government Relations for the state's largest driver of educational attainment and economic development, the University of Maine System (UMS), and a proud alumna of the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) and the University of Maine (UMaine).

On behalf of UMS, I write to ask that the following boards and commissions be removed from LD 2241 and able to continue their important work for Maine as needed:

- Maine Workforce, Research, Development and Student Achievement Institute
- Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program Advisory Committee
- State Education and Employment Outcomes Task Force

The **Maine Workforce, Research, Development and Student Achievement Institute** was established in 2021 as a three-year pilot through which UMS researchers would conduct nonpartisan research and evaluation on an ongoing basis regarding programs and policies within the jurisdiction of the Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Commerce (IDEA), as we did for your Committee recently [regarding Daylight Savings Time](#). It is modeled after a nationally recognized 25-year collaboration between UMS and the Legislature's Education & Cultural Affairs Committee, known as [the Maine Education Policy Research Institute](#) (MEPRI).

The advisory steering committee associated with the institute is invaluable to determining which research projects are pursued, and includes members of the private, public and nonprofit sectors appointed by the IDEA Committee. Though those appointments were delayed by more than one year, the steering committee is active and their input was instrumental to shaping the institute's first project: a comprehensive labor market analysis and corresponding online dashboard presented to the Legislature in September and available at econdatavizme.com.

This Committee should know that your colleagues on the IDEA Committee voted unanimously last month to make the institute, and thus its advisory steering committee, permanent (LD 284). With an increasingly engaged steering committee, the upcoming refresh of the State's 10-year economic strategy and a long-term legislative commitment, UMS is excited for the institute to realize its full potential and for Maine-based data and analysis to drive more of the Legislature's decision-making. While UMS was frankly unaware until recently of our requirement to file with the Maine Secretary of State's Office regarding the membership and activities of the steering committee, please know I am now in the process of doing so.

While we understand the **Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program Advisory**

Committee has not yet been formed, there will likely be a need in the future for our partners at the Finance Authority of Maine to convene this group. Similarly, the **State Education and Employment Outcomes Task Force** is intended to support the Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation System (EARNs). Administered by the Maine Department of Labor, Maine EARNs links data from our public university system and the Maine Community College System (MCCS) with State employment/wage records. UMS and MCCS agree that Maine EARNs is essential to ensuring education and employment outcomes data is readily available and transparent for Maine students and their families and thus that this task force should not be eliminated at this time.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if I can provide additional information in advance of your work session.