



To the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Housing & Economic Development from Jonathan Delorme, Program Lead, Educate Maine

In Support Of

LD 210 "An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027"

Tuesday, February 4th 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Housing & Economic Development Committees, my name is Jonathan Delorme, Program Lead at Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of L.D. #210.

Educate Maine's mission is to ensure that Maine people are prepared to succeed in education and career and that all Maine people reach their highest educational potential. As Program Lead for Educate Maine's Summer Internship Program, I work with over 100 Maine businesses to support over 500 paid summer interns by providing networking opportunities, workshops and training, and fun excursions that promote Maine industries, locations, and brands to young professionals in our state.

Maine businesses need young, talented, and motivated professionals to stay in Maine if they are already here or relocate permanently to Maine if they are studying or working here in the summer. We are so excited to be a part of the Realize Maine Network in order to better connect these young professionals with resources, people, and organizations that will attract them to live in Maine. The Realize Maine Network, administered by the Maine Development Fund, "brings together regional group representation united around the cause of attracting and retaining young people to live, work, and play in Maine."

Access to this group allows us to work together with the business community and professional groups like regional chamber of commerce groups or other organizations to plan impactful programs and events that attract, retain, and support young professionals in Maine. Every year,



our universities graduate thousands of graduates and every year hundreds of student-interns and recent graduates join companies as paid interns, apprentices, research assistants, or seasonal employees.

Our program, in collaboration with the Realize Maine Network partner organizations, looks to engage with these young professionals through outreach campaigns, events, and other networking opportunities. This past summer, our Educate Maine's Maine Career Catalyst Summer Internship Program hosted over 20 free events throughout the state. Some were in-person while others were virtual or hybrid. At these events we welcomed interns from across the state and industries to meet. We've shown a marked increase in participants' perceptions of Maine after their successful internships and participation in our events. With 503 participating interns last year and a median age of 21 years-old, 75% of interns reported that MCC programming improved their summer internship experience by "a lot" or "a fair amount." Some of the major benefits this program offers is for interns to meet other interns, make professional connections around the state, and learn more about Maine industries and job opportunities.

What happens after these interns end their internships? Where do students go after they graduate from their bachelor or masters programs? How do we ensure they stay here in Maine? Continued funding of the Realize Maine Network means we can continue working with our partners to connect young talent to other professional groups like Live + Work in Maine, AGC's Emerging Contractors, and the young professional groups at the regional Chambers of Commerce. Maine needs these young professionals to think that Maine is fun and a viable place to live and work. We do that through creating connections and opening their eyes to opportunities in our state. Maine is a small state and our networks are so powerful. Once young professionals realize this, they are so much more likely to stay in our state.

We appreciate your consideration for continued funding of the Realize Maine Network. We look forward to our continued efforts in strengthening the next generation of Maine's leaders through collaboration and shared vision.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Delorme
Educate Maine