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Senator, Representative, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michael Odokara-Okigbo. I serve on the State of Maine AI Task Force and am the Founder and CEO of ESM Global, an AI infrastructure company headquartered in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the proposed investments in data governance, AI training for state employees, and the establishment of a dedicated AI policy position.

These initiatives are foundational to responsible AI adoption.

Artificial intelligence is already entering public systems. The question is not whether Maine will use AI, but whether we will implement it with discipline, transparency, and fairness.

The proposed expansion of data governance within OIT is critical. AI systems require strong data standards, clear accountability, and thoughtful oversight. Without governance, adoption becomes fragmented and reactive. With governance, it becomes strategic.

Equally important is the proposed AI policy position and procurement study.

AI procurement is not traditional software procurement. It involves data rights, model evaluation, security standards, and long-term lifecycle management. Maine has an opportunity to modernize procurement processes so that they are transparent, competitive, and accessible to qualified innovators across the state.

As a Maine-based founder building AI infrastructure, I believe it is essential that emerging and established companies alike have a fair opportunity to contribute solutions. Clear procurement frameworks help ensure that AI adoption is based on merit, capability, and public value—not familiarity or legacy structures.

If designed thoughtfully, these initiatives can create a system where innovation is encouraged, accountability is strengthened, and Maine companies have a fair and competitive pathway to serve their own state.

This is how Maine can lead—not just in adopting AI, but in governing it responsibly. I strongly encourage the Committee to support these initiatives.

Thank you for your leadership.

Respectfully,

Michael Odokara-Okigbo
Member, Maine AI Task Force
Founder & CEO, NKENNEAi