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Testimony of Representative Michael Brennan introducing

LD 1935, An Act to Promote Workforce Development by Establishing a Workforce Development Program

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

Good afternoon, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. I am Michael Brennan, and I represent House District 115, which includes a portion of Portland. I am here to introduce **LD 1935, An Act to Promote Workforce Development by Establishing a Workforce Development Program** for your consideration.

This bill requires the Commissioner of Labor to develop and implement a workforce development program to provide services related to language acquisition, housing, job training and education, transportation and health care and case management.

In coordination with other state agencies, this bill asks that the commissioner develop and implement a system for intake of persons needing services offered by the program, including an application form and a system for case management.

According to the Maine Department of Labor's Workforce Outlook Report, which examines our workforce challenges in Maine from 2012 to 2022, the size of Maine's population has remained relatively flat since 2008. Without positive natural change, Maine is dependent upon net in-migration to maintain our population and workforce. In 2012 the number of residents ages 45 to 64 was 411,000. That group is considered to be labor force "leavers." At the other end of the spectrum are the 302,000 residents under age 20, most of whom are labor force "entrants." The 109,000 gap between potential labor force leavers and entrants poses a significant challenge, particularly when our labor force totals just 700,000.

Our workforce challenges have been a long time coming, which only grew during the height of the pandemic. Labor entrants need additional support to gain and remain employed, and this bill offers them the assistance they need, which is a great investment in workers and our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.