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***Testimony of Rep. Tiffany Roberts in support of
LD 1918, An Act to Modernize Maine's Business Incentive Programs by Creating the
Dirigo Business Incentives Program and Eliminating Certain Other Tax Incentive
Programs
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement
and Business***

Senator Curry and committee colleagues, as you know, my name is Tiffany Roberts, and I represent House District 149, part of North Berwick and part of South Berwick. I am here today to testify in support of *LD 1918, An Act to Modernize Maine's Business Incentive Programs by Creating the Dirigo Business Incentives Program and Eliminating Certain other Tax Incentive Programs*.

I am pleased to support this bill, which I believe will bring Maine's approach to business incentive programs up-to-date and offer benefits to communities and workers across the state.

As members of this committee, we hear bills all session long about incentivizing worker training in Maine. While the past few years have seen big investments in worker training programs funded with federal dollars, those dollars are going to run out. And when they do, we need to be sure that Maine people can still get the training they need to get good-paying jobs that allow them to live and thrive in our state.

As some of you are aware, I believe the Pine Tree Development Zone program, which was created in 2003, is outdated and no longer is the best fit for Maine's economy. When it was created, the goal was to incentivize the creation of jobs. Now, we have trouble filling our open jobs with skilled workers. We need to encourage companies to train workers and invest in physical infrastructure in our communities.

I have had conversations with the Department over the past two and a half years as they worked with stakeholders to develop this bill, and I was pleased that they heard the concerns we raised, took our feedback and addressed it in the bill we have before us today.

The Dirigo Business Incentives program proposed in this bill includes a capital investment tax credit and a tax credit for worker training paid for by businesses for their employees. Its goal is to increase economic prosperity in Maine by improving the value of what we sell per worker.

To do that – and to keep Maine’s economy growing - workers need training in the right skills and the business investment in infrastructure to put that training to work.

Of course, when the Legislature creates a new program that has an impact on our state’s financial resources, it is critically important that we are able to evaluate whether the program is working and meeting the goals we set. The challenge of evaluating success was one of the big criticisms of the Pine Tree Development Zone program. The language of *this* bill includes clear evaluation metrics and parameters so that lawmakers and the public will be able to assess the outcomes of the program more easily and transparently.

Dirigo Business Incentives will support Maine businesses and those businesses who want to invest in Maine, as well as Maine people – preparing us to meet the needs of our economy now and in the years to come through physical investment and skills training.

Thank you for your consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions.