



The Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business
Testimony from Jason Judd, Executive Director, Educate Maine

In Support Of

L.D. # 1918: "An Act to Modernize Maine's Business Incentive Programs by Creating the Dirigo Business Incentives Program and Eliminating Certain Other Tax Incentive Programs"

May 19, 2023

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, my name is Jason Judd, Executive Director of Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of L.D. #1918.

Educate Maine's mission is to champion college and career readiness through increasing educational attainment. We are a founding member of the MaineSpark Coalition working diligently to increase adult educational attainment to 60% by 2025 to meet the needs of Maine employers. We know that our economy needs additional workers with credentials of value or college degrees in order to meet the open and future jobs available in our state. This bill allows employers and employees to collaborate on upskilling in order to increase long-term productivity and economic mobility.

Expanding our workforce is essential in order to grow our economy. In 2022, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, Maine Development Foundation, and Educate Maine collaborated on a statewide survey on the most pressing needs of the business community. This survey, *Making Maine Work*, highlighted the size of Maine's workforce as three out of the top six priorities for Maine's employers. These results also reinforced the need to expand the trained workforce as outlined in Maine's Economic Development Strategy. This bill prioritizes upskilling people to create pathways into high-wage jobs and high-value sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, fishing, forestry, software, and other fields.

At Educate Maine, we administer a variety of internship and apprenticeship programs in partnership with Maine higher education institutions and employers. These experiential learning programs help students learn the skills needed to thrive in the workforce. This bill will encourage employers to invest in high quality training programs for their employees and plan for long-term workforce needs. It will also help Maine reach its state attainment goal by helping employees get their first credential of value or college degree while prioritizing the skills needed in specific industries. We have made tremendous progress with education attainment as a state raising our rate to 55.0% of adults with a credential of value which is just a few points shy of the 2025 goal. This bill will help employers, employees, and our economy.

I strongly encourage you to support L.D. #1918. Thank you for your time.