



CENTRAL MAINE POWER

Linda Ball – Vice President, Customer Service

LD 262 An Act to Strengthen Maine's Workforce

January 16, 2024

Testifying: In Favor

Good afternoon Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the IDEAB committee.

My name is Linda Ball. I'm the Vice President of Customer Service for Central Maine Power Company and the current chair of the Board of MDF. I'm here today to express my strong support for MDF as an organization and to urge you to pass LD262, to restore public funding to MDF and expand the term limits for the MDF Board.

First, I'd like to support the term expansion from five to eight years for Board members, using my own experience with MDF as an example. I'm in my third year on the board of MDF, and I'm continuing to learn more about MDF staff, non-profit finances, and more about the amazing work MDF does to support and strengthen Maine's economy and workforce. Learning about the many endeavors of MDF, how they function and who they partner with is no small endeavor. Expanding the term limits from five to eight year would give Board members more opportunity to learn about the depth and breadth of MDF, and provide us with a great ability to work with MDF to grow Maine's economy and workforce. As it is now, just as I truly become comfortable understanding all that MDF does, the reporting structure, the finances and even the people, my term is more than half over. I would welcome and appreciate an opportunity to be able to serve a bit longer, and I'm certain MDF would be better served with more tenured, knowledgeable and experienced Board members. I've also given to the committee Clerk written testimony from the three prior Chairs of MDF, also supporting the expansion of term limits.

I also strongly encourage you restore public funding to MDF. Currently, MDF survives almost exclusively on grants and philanthropy from the wider Maine community. Restoring matching public funds would expand MDF's ability to work strategically for the state, and clearly signal to the business community the State's support of MDF and its mission to advance our state's economy.

I'm very proud that CMP and Avangrid have been strong supporters of MDF for many years.

First, through our own philanthropy, having provided \$175,000 to MDF in the past three years. One particular focus was MaineSpark, which has an admirable goal that by 2025, 60% of Mainers will have education or workforce credentials. What an amazing program to position Maine and its families for success in our changing economy!

We also support MDF through the Institute of Civic Leadership and Leadership Maine programs, including my own participation in Leadership Maine a few years ago. These courses not only teach collaborative, adaptive leadership skills but also provide in depth knowledge about Maine itself, and the very real issues confronting us. Yellow, Jan and the other leaders at MDF encourage civil conversations, even through disagreement, about the economy and our workforce, and what's needed to move our state forward. At CMP, we've found that the tuition cost and the time spent by employees participating pays invaluable dividends in terms of state-wide knowledge and development of our future leaders. With regard to ICL in particular, Avangrid's support is not only for our own employees, but also to provide scholarship support to enable participation by civic leaders from forestry mill towns to help them drive the comeback in their own communities.

Finally, MDF is also a valuable partner for CMP in advancing our own business. In looking for a partner for our Grid Resiliency and Innovation Partnership Program grants, MDF was the obvious choice. They have the relationships with and knowledge about communities to help identify where the work is most needed, simply because of their years of experience and dedicated staff. With MDF's support, we secured a \$30M grant to fund reliability improvements in disadvantaged communities here in Maine. We will continue to work with MDF to ensure that the work we do will maximize potential community benefits.

In closing, CMP and Avangrid are committed to continuing to support MDF and their mission, as are so many other businesses and organizations here in Maine. MDF is a trusted voice, uniquely positioned to advance the economy without risk of partisanship getting in the way. They work across political and ideological boundaries, supporting Maine businesses for all of us. The support from CMP, Avangrid and the business community comes through participation and through funding to advance MDF's mission. As much money as businesses contribute, more is needed. I urge the committee to support MDF and LD 262, and restore public funding to MDF. The valuable work they do for all of us deserves to be recognized and supported by the State, just as it is by the business community.

Thank you very much for your time this afternoon, and in advance for your support of LD 262, to allow MDF to continue working for all of us here in Maine.