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Testimony of Rep. Parnell Terry presenting

LD 620, An Act to Provide Support Services for Military Members Transitioning to Civilian Life in Maine

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, I am Representative Parnell Terry of District 108, which includes part of Gorham. I am here today to present **LD 620, An Act to Provide Support Services for Military Members Transitioning to Civilian Life in Maine.**

In the 130th Legislature this committee and the whole legislature approved an appropriation of \$200,000 to help recruit newly retired military members from all over the country to come live and work in the state of Maine. This was a pilot program to see if this kind of work would be successful in bringing new families with solid work experience and the desire to lay roots in our incredible state.

The pilot program was a huge success. With that small appropriation dozens of new families made the move to Maine, helping to add a \$45 million return on investment to the state.

Boots2Roots is one such organization doing this incredible work. They partner with companies and community development organizations including Live and Work Maine, Dead River Company, Bath Iron Works, Northern Light Health, Unum and many others, to connect veterans and their families to meaningful employment, helping them integrate seamlessly into communities across the state. They are now also partnering with a range of educational institutions like The Landing School, Maine Upward Bound and the Roux Institute to help even more retiring military members and their families find opportunities in Maine.

In 2024, Boots2Roots had record enrollment and has supported more than 825 new Mainers in putting down roots — significantly contributing to Maine's workforce and impacting Maine's

economy. These servicemembers and their families share the unparalleled work ethic and sense of grit that Mainers are so well known for, making this a natural fit.¹

During a time when so many businesses across the state are struggling to hire and retain quality employees, and our state is struggling with an aging workforce, organizations like Boots2Roots don't just benefit the retiring service members, but they also provide a sorely needed benefit to the state by fostering connection between dedicated and hardworking individuals and businesses experiencing workforce shortages.

Supporting these efforts is a win-win for all of us, and I am so proud to advocate for this work.

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

¹ <https://boots2roots.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/58/2024/12/Stakeholder-Letter-December-2024.pdf>