

**TESTIMONY
OF DENISE GARLAND, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
Hearing Date: March 5, 2025
Hearing Time: 10:00 a.m.

**“An Act to Provide Support Services for Military Members
Transitioning to Civilian Life in Maine”**

Good morning, Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. My name is Denise Garland, and I am the Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development or DECD for short. I am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 620 - An Act to Provide Support Services for Military Members Transitioning to Civilian Life in Maine.

In 2021, \$200,000 in one-time funds were provided to DECD from the Federal ARP funds designated in 2021 Public Laws, Chapter 483, Part II. The legislation directed DECD, in consultation with the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services, to design a pilot project for outreach and support services for active-duty military members who would be transitioning to civilian life. I thought it might be helpful to share some of the results of that pilot project that went to Boots2Roots through a competitive process. Boots2Roots engaged in a proactive workforce attraction marketing campaign that included military magazine advertisements, billboard placement and in-person and virtual military job fairs in and around military installations. Additionally, these funds enabled Boots2Roots to increase their resume coaching, interview coaching and transition coaching programs. At the end of the pilot program, Boots2Roots enrolled 190 military members, Veterans and

military spouses in the Transition to Work Program. Prior to this funding, annual enrollment was approximately 32 military members.

Other results from this pilot project showed that 94 percent of the candidates who completed the Boots2Roots program found work within 60 days of arriving in Maine. 80 percent of enrollees were married with children and 85 percent purchased a home within twelve months of arriving in Maine. 65 percent of those participants were not originally from Maine and neither was their spouse.

Every year, approximately 200,000 men and women leave U.S. Military service and return to life as civilians. Twelve to eighteen months before they leave, these service members are actively seeking where to transition. Having a permanently funded program is key to the success of ensuring Maine is promoted as a welcome place for transitioning military members and their families.

If it is the pleasure of the Committee, DECD is willing to accept the funding and work collaboratively with Maine Bureau of Veteran's Services to ensure funds are provided to organizations conducting outreach and providing support services to active-duty military members and their families who are transitioning to civilian life.

This concludes my testimony for the Department of Economic and Community Development.