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**Testimony of Kim Moore, Director of the Bureau of Employment
Services, Maine Department of Labor
Neither for Nor Against
LD 1117, An Act to Strengthen Maine's Workforce Through
Certified Pre-apprenticeship Training Programs
To the Joint Standing Committee on Labor
Hearing, April 1, 2025**

Good afternoon Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor. My name is Kim Moore, and I serve as Director of the Bureau of Employment Services at the Maine Department of Labor (Department). I am here today to speak on behalf of the Department Neither for Nor Against LD 1117, An Act to Strengthen Maine's Workforce Through Certified Preapprenticeship Training Programs.

We want to thank the sponsor for his interest in the registered apprenticeship program, pre-apprenticeship, and his willingness to engage with the Department about this bill.

In spring of 2023, certified pre-apprenticeship programming in Maine was codified in Title 26 §3213 and new Chapter 3 Rules were adopted by the Department of Labor. To be certified in Maine, pre-apprenticeship programs must partner with a registered apprenticeship sponsor to enable a direct transition into registered apprenticeship and recognize gained skills and competencies, provide industry-aligned training that includes hands-on learning and safety education, have a strategy to recruit from groups with traditionally low participation registered apprenticeship, follow U.S. Department of Labor standards for high quality pre-apprenticeships and comply with equal opportunity laws.

Through strategic investments of federal and state funding to develop and deliver quality pre-apprenticeships, 56 programs are now available across various sectors including healthcare, construction, education, automotive technology, manufacturing, aquaculture, and hospitality. These pre-apprenticeship initiatives have played a crucial role in advancing registered apprenticeship programs, fostering a more integrated and sustainable workforce development strategy.

Over 1,000 pre-apprentices have completed a program since pre-apprenticeships were first certified in 2023. To date, 379 of those participants have entered directly into a registered apprenticeship program; many more are in the application process.

The Department is committed to supporting, as funds are available, pre-apprenticeship programs that have demonstrated commitment to including individuals not traditionally seen in registered apprenticeship programs and are successful in converting pre-apprenticeship participants into registered apprentices in good jobs. The language additionally codifies the department's current practice of allowing grant funds to support program development and staffing for grantees, and supportive services for participants.

We offer the following considerations to the Committee pertaining to the bill.

- **6. Funding:** the bill requires the department to consult with the Maine Apprenticeship Council in its certified pre-apprenticeship grantmaking process. The Department would strongly discourage adoption of this language as Advisory Council membership, by statute, specifically includes sponsors, intermediaries and training providers of registered apprenticeship and certified pre-apprenticeship. Council involvement in grantmaking would exclude or disqualify Advisory Council members who may also be qualified applicants for any funding
- **6. Funding, C.:** The Maine Apprenticeship Programs's experience with current pre-apprenticeship program grantees has shown that the most effective delivery of supportive services, and effective use of apprenticeship funds, includes partnership with employment and training program partners including Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) service providers and the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP). These programs are designed to assess the needs of pre-apprentices and ensure they receive necessary support services to complete their training and transition into registered apprenticeships. The Department would recommend language that recognizes and encourages these essential linkages rather than requiring programs to deliver these services themselves.
 - Suggested language change: "C. Demonstrated the provision of strong, comprehensive support services essential to ensure success, either through these funds or connection to workforce funding outside of apprenticeship funds."
- The sponsor's amendment includes an \$8 million appropriation. The Department is unable to support the general fund appropriation, as it is not included in the Governor's budget.

In summary, the Department appreciates the overall goal of this bill as it relates to supporting and strengthening pre-apprenticeships, and we appreciate Rep. Webb for bringing this bill forward. MDOL is committed to being an active participant in ongoing discussions with the sponsor, as well as conversations with impacted employers and pre-apprenticeship sponsors. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony, and the Department will be available for the work session to assist with the technical aspects of this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have now or at a future work session.

The Maine Department of Labor is committed to serving Maine workers and businesses by helping employers recruit and train a talented workforce, providing workers with skills needed to compete in our economy, assisting individuals when jobs are lost, aiding people with disabilities reach career goals, ensuring safe and fair workplaces for people on the job and providing research and analysis of employment data to support job growth.