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To: Senator Joe Rafferty, Chair
Representative Michael Brennan, Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Libby Stone-Sterling, Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Maine Department of Labor

Date: March 22, 2021

Re: L.D. 552, An Act to Strengthen the Individualized Education Program Process

My name is Libby Stone-Sterling and I am the Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation at the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services works to provide full access to employment, independence and community integration for people with disabilities. While I cannot attend today's public hearing, I am sending this letter to indicate that the Department of Labor (the Department) is neither for nor against and is providing additional information on LD 552, *An Act to Strengthen the Individualized Education Program Process* as amended.

Through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) serves thousands of students who receive special education services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) each year. Services to these students include Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) that, in coordination with schools, assist students with disabilities to learn about the world of work and prepare for post-secondary education, employment and independent living. VR provides opportunities for students to explore jobs in their communities through activities like employer tours, job shadows, and paid work experience. VR counselors also provide guidance and counseling to students and families and work with them to create an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that serves as a road map to the young person's employment goals. This plan is ideally intended to build on the transition planning included in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and VR counselors often participate and give input in IEP and other school meetings to support transition planning.

Currently under the federal special education law - IDEA and related regulations, which include (CFR 300.321, IEP team membership, 300.300 Parental Consent, 300.324 Development, review and revision of the IEP) on IEP membership and decision making there are provisions to support participation and input of IEP team members including the student and family. Federal and State rules allow parents and schools to invite others "with knowledge or special expertise" about the student to participate in an IEP meeting (CFR 300.321).

Students' transition years are time-limited; students who do not receive timely services are at risk for poorer post-secondary outcomes – particularly in education and employment. While we value the

importance of many voices in the IEP process, we support efforts to minimize the likelihood of delays or disruptions in transition services .

Thank you for your consideration of this information. I am available to attend the work session if that would be helpful.