



Manufacturers Association of Maine

Testimony of
Jessica L. Laliberte
On Behalf Manufacturers Association of Maine
In Support of

LD 1329 An Act To Establish the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative in the Department of Education To Lower Barriers to Career Advancement

April 22, 2021

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, good morning. My name is Jessica L. Laliberte. I serve as the policy relations manager for the Manufacturers Association of Maine, a non-partisan, pro-growth, pro-manufacturing industry organization representing about 400 manufacturing businesses in our state and the 29,000 employees they employ. Several of our members are employee owned, ESOP companies.

I am speaking today in support of *LD 1329 An Act To Establish the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative in the Department of Education To Lower Barriers to Career Advancement*

A strong economy requires a highly educated workforce that can innovate and adapt to change. The jobs of the future will require education and training beyond high school and many of the highest growth and highest wage jobs will require some post-secondary degree or certification. Yet, Maine's higher education attainment rates trail regional rates. Faced with this gap in qualified workers, it is imperative that every Maine person achieve their highest educational potential. Now more than ever Maine businesses need help to educate the workforce and develop ideas to help grow our economy. We need to enroll, educate, and most importantly graduate more people-people with the skills and knowledge for this changing economy.

Education is a critical investment in Maine, its people and in our economy. For our state to thrive we need a skilled workforce. Maine's workforce is facing a crisis. We are the oldest state in the nation. Workers are retiring and there are few qualified candidates waiting to fill those vacancies. Today, manufacturing businesses across Maine have thousands of openings and no workers to fill

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them. Legislation such as this, we see as an opportunity to increase our skilled workforce and fill some of the 4,000 vacancies we have today.

The Manufacturers Association of Maine is supportive of efforts that seeks to increase skill acquisition and bolster our workforce. We would caution, however, that efforts should be collaborative and not be siloed and duplicative.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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