



**Testimony of Executive Director, Ben Lucas**

Testimony NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST LD 1329: “An Act To Establish the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative in the Department of Education To Lower Barriers to Career Advancement”

April 22nd, 2021

---

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Ben Lucas, I live in Portland, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Jobs Council. The Maine Jobs Council is a new, statewide, nonpartisan, member-driven advocacy organization that advances public policies to support the creation and preservation of foundational jobs in Maine. I am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 1329.

We are testifying neither for nor against this legislation but are supportive of the concept and we thank Rep. Talbot-Ross for bringing this legislation forward. Educating our students and having them develop skills in school is one component of helping keep students in Maine and it could help address our pending workforce crisis. Maine needs an overall strategic plan for the attraction of foundational jobs that can inform students about future employment opportunities and needed skills. While we believe this legislation could be one part of the solution, we have concerns about the funding source.

Foundational jobs exist in industries such as manufacturing, construction, farming, fishing, forestry, transportation, and energy. They add value, create wealth, and bring revenue into Maine. Foundational jobs require workers with advanced skills that can adapt to new industries and advanced technologies. Training students for this future is critical to keeping jobs in Maine.

Maine has a serious workforce issue. We have an aging workforce and not enough young people staying or moving here. According to the Maine Center for Workforce Research and

Information, the number of people in Maine over the age of 65 will increase by 113,000 in the next 5 years. In that same time period, the number of workers between the ages of 16-64 will decline by 31,000. A report published just this week by “News Center Maine” noted that our retiring workers will leave 158,000 jobs open in the next five years. Maine needs to act urgently to develop a long term plan that helps our workforce and keeps jobs in Maine.

In closing, we again thank the sponsor and cosponsors for bringing this legislation forward, the Maine Jobs Council supports legislation that helps address workforce development. The best way to grow our state is with a robust economy full of quality jobs that provide choices, career growth, and increasing wages. Keeping our students in Maine is a great way to grow our talent pool and develop more foundational jobs. We believe there are aspects of this legislation that help in those areas and we look forward to learning more about this legislation and will be available for the work session.

Thank you.

Ben Lucas  
Executive Director  
Maine Jobs Council  
[b.lucas@mainejobsCouncil.com](mailto:b.lucas@mainejobsCouncil.com)  
207-441-9333