



## Testimony to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

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

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Senator , Representative , and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

My name is Amy Winston and I am the State Policy Director at Coastal Enterprises, Inc (CEI). I reside in Edgcomb and am testifying today on behalf of CEI in support of LD 149, “An Act To Facilitate Licensure for Credentialed Individuals from Other Jurisdictions.”

CEI is a 43-year-old Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) with a mission to support good jobs, environmentally sustainable enterprises, and shared prosperity in Maine and other rural regions by integrating financing, business and industry expertise, and policy solutions. We envision a world in which communities are economically and environmentally healthy, and racially diverse, enabling all people, especially those with low incomes, to reach their full potential. CEI believes that our economy should work for everyone.

CEI works closely with the businesses we finance and advise to address operational, workforce, and environmental challenges. We also provide counseling and training for individuals and families, recognizing that building assets and managing debt, as well as a good job, are key ingredients for family financial security. Our Start Smart program has a strong track record supporting aspiring new Maine entrepreneurs to start and grow businesses, and our small business advisors and financial wellness team partner with Mainers of all economic, ethnic, and educational backgrounds.

Maine’s demographic challenges, including its natural birth decrease and age structure, are well documented and at odds with future economic growth and prosperity<sup>i</sup>. We all know that more Mainers are retiring from than entering the workforce and employers can’t find skilled workers. There is a skill mismatch between the existing labor pool and available jobs. Put together, these population and workforce trends diminish economic activity, making it challenging to recruit and attract new, and innovate, retain, and expand existing businesses to grow the economy. Job market development is critical both to retaining and attracting residents.

The state’s [10-year Economic Development Strategy](#) prioritizes workforce talent development and business innovation in key sectors. Importantly, this approach includes integration into the workforce of new Mainers along with those who are chronically un- or under-employed.



This bill replaces LD 647 (An Act To Attract, Educate and Retain New State Residents To Strengthen the Workforce) in the 129<sup>th</sup>, which this committee passed and was headed for the floor when the legislature adjourned due to the pandemic. A lot of thought, care and collaboration went into (drafting) LD 647, which combined expertise in applied English language instruction with understanding of cross-cultural career navigation services to support Maine’s integration of new residents into the workforce.

Like its predecessor, LD 1329 has been thoughtfully crafted to address Maine’s workforce needs. It incorporates evidence-based practices and expands its focus in addressing the complex needs of Maine workers. This bill provides specialized career navigation services at adult continuing education hubs to promote economic inclusion by expanding workforce opportunities and referrals for wraparound services. While its predecessor focused specifically on English language acquisition and employment navigation and supports aimed mainly at the needs of Maine’s immigrant community, the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative in LD 1329 widens its reach to help under- and unemployed participants to acquire additional education, skills, licensure, or other preparation needed to obtain employment and participate in the workforce to their fullest potential. provides case by case support for new and old Mainers alike to access and advance in a career ladder. For new Mainers, this ensures that they are not penalized for out-of-state or foreign based education, training, experience and/or credentials. For everyone, this long-term approach will improve financial security of many seasonal, part-time, disabled and out-of-work Maine workers.

Thank you for consideration of this testimony.

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<sup>1</sup>Barker, Cleo. “Barriers to Employment and Overcoming Economic Integration Challenges for Foreign-Born workers in Maine. 2018. University of Maine. Honors College. 315. Accessed at UMaine digital commons; Dickstein, Carla et al. Building Maine’s Economy: How Maine Can Embrace Immigrants and Strengthen the Workforce. Coastal Enterprises, Inc. With support from the Emanuel and Pauline A. Lerner Foundation and Broad Reach Fund. 2016. 43pp.; LeParulo, Paul. “Attracting New Maine Residents: The Effects of Educational Attainment and Age on Interstate Mobility.” Maine Policy Review 28.2(2019):38148. Accessed at UMaine digital commons.; McLaughlin, Phoenix. 2020. “Supporting Maine’s Foreign-Trained Professionals.” Prepared for the Maine Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. Kennedy School of Government. Master’s Thesis. 2020.