



Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 1412: “An Act To Require the Department of Education To Provide Information to Students Allowing Them To Make Informed Choices Regarding Their Education and Professional Futures”

April 27th, 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 in support of LD 1412.

Maine has a serious workforce issue. A recent report by “News Center Maine” noted that our retiring workers will leave 158,000 open jobs 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. We believe LD 1412 could be one step in addressing the workforce crisis.

As stated, this bill proposes to create a process for the Department of Education to provide information to students that allows them to make informed decisions about their education and professional future. We believe this change could improve the workforce crisis in Maine. Not all students are destined for four-year colleges yet that has been the focus of most K-12 education. Providing students with college cost and job option information could help employers fill a record number of open jobs in Maine.

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 have competitive starting wages and many do not require a four-year degree.

We believe students should be made aware of these opportunities through the career landscape information collection outlined in LD 1412.

Maine needs an overall strategic plan for the attraction of foundational jobs that can inform students about future employment opportunities and needed skills. If this legislation passes, it will make more Maine students aware of the opportunities that exist to get a job and start making a good wage. This can be a pipeline for foundational jobs, help move our economy forward, and falls in line with Governor Mills 10-Year Economic Plan and the goal to attract 75,000 people to Maine's talent-pool.

In closing, we thank Senator Pouliot 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 urge this committee to pass LD 1412.

Thank you.

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