

March 3, 2025

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development:

My name is Sarah Hansen, and **I am writing to offer my enthusiastic support of An Act to Restore Matching Funding to the Maine Development Foundation (LD 629).**

Back in 1977, the State of Maine pledged to support the Maine Development Foundation annually by matching the first \$250,000 in private sector funding. Unfortunately, the state has not followed through with this commitment since the early 1990s, and MDF is making do with an allocation of only \$58,000. As a state-chartered public-private partnership – structured deliberately to be independent, not a state agency – MDF is unique in its ability to be entrepreneurial and innovative. They have become strong economic champions of Maine's economy, creating dynamic and transformational opportunities for all communities and economic sectors throughout the state. It is time for the state to renew their commitment and restore the \$250,000 to support MDF's invaluable leadership.

The Maine Downtown Center (MDC), one of MDF's leading programs, has made an invaluable impact on communities across Maine. They serve as a statewide resource for downtown revitalization, and the demand for services continues to rise. MDC fills a gap in knowledge and services that no one else is able to provide. Their individualized approach takes more time, but has great impact and satisfaction and success at the local level. The return on investment continues to be overwhelming: for every \$1 invested in one of Maine's 11 Main Streets, there is a \$23 return.

MDF's track record is proven and makes clear the return on investment will be substantial. They continue to leverage their unrestricted funds to maximize impact for the State of Maine. My own personal experience as an Advisory Council Member for the Maine Downtown Center has allowed me to see the extraordinary impact of MDF first-hand. Please support the incredible work of the Maine Development Foundation by honoring the matching fund commitment made back in 1977.

Please support An Act to Restore Matching Funding to the Maine Development Foundation (LD 629). Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Hansen', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sarah Hansen
Westbrook, Maine