



## **Testimony in Support of LD 149 – An Act to Facilitate Licensure for Credentialed Individuals from Other Jurisdictions**

Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business  
March 23, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the Committee,

My name is Eamonn Dundon, and I am the Director of Advocacy at the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce. We submit this testimony in strong support of LD 149.

We are a business membership organization supporting the communities of Portland, South Portland, Cape Elizabeth, Scarborough, Westbrook, Gorham, Falmouth and Cumberland. Our membership is comprised of 1,300 businesses in the region that range from self-employed individuals to small businesses and start-ups to large international, billion-dollar companies operating on a global scale. Workforce development is among our top three policy priorities, and that is why we are supportive of this proposal to make commonsense adjustments to the Maine professional licensure system.

Governor Mills' 10-year economic plan makes clear what so many of our members encounter as they try and recruit and retain employees: Maine simply does not have enough workers to fill the jobs our economy needs to grow. The economic plan estimates that in order to meet our economic growth goals, we will need to add at least 75,000 employees to our workforce. This bill unlocks the potential of so many out of state and foreign-born professionals who can meet the demands of economy if given the chance.

From industries like health care, to manufacturing, childcare, and the trades, too many workers are currently on the sidelines of our economy due to licensing barriers. Despite a strong desire among these populations to work these jobs with good wages and solid career paths, the barriers to entry are too bureaucratic, time consuming, or indecipherable to meet. This bill goes a long way to removing those barriers and bringing our employers relief by providing them with new pools of talent. Importantly, this bill does not dilute or lower standards, it simply empowers the department to use good judgement in assessing comparable education and licensing standards from other jurisdictions to ensure that Maine's are not duplicative and are not in the way of putting qualified people to work in their chosen industry.

In our partnership with the City of Portland's Office of Economic Opportunity on a program called Portland Professional Connections, we come across many foreign trained professionals, who are both authorized to work and proficient in English, yet still face barriers to licensure in their field. The participants in the program become frustrated with the standards and oftentimes choose to work in much lower-paying manually intensive jobs, even though they often carry the equivalent credentials necessary to be contributing to our economy in a much more productive manner.

On behalf of the business community in the Portland region, we ask that you please vote to support LD 149.