



STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC  
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



JANET T. MILLS  
GOVERNOR

HEATHER JOHNSON  
COMMISSIONER

**Testimony Of: Martha Bentley  
Neither for Nor Against LD 1476**

**Resolve, Directing the Maine Economic Growth Council To Create and Share Measures of Progress**

April 20, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and members of the IDEA Committee, my name is Martha Bentley and I am the Director of Economic Development Coordination for the Department of Economic and Community Development. I am here to testify Neither For Nor Against LD 1476.

The Department of Economic and Community Development supports the general concept proposed in the resolve: Developing and promoting use of an online tracking dashboard for the Maine Strategic Plan, “Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029: A focus on Talent and Innovation.” This effort is already envisioned by the Department in its implementation of the plan, in partnership with the State Economist office, the Maine Center for Business and Economic Research (MCBER - a federally designated University Center and funded in part by the US Economic Development Administration hosted by USM), the University of Maine team lead by Dr. Andrew Crawley (who provided supporting research and data for the plan’s development), and the Maine Economic Growth Council’s contracted economists who generate the Measures of Growth document each year. Until the dashboard is fully developed, we have provided a static infographic on annual progress against the three overall goals of the plan on our citizen-facing strategic plan website: [www.maineconomicgrowth.com](http://www.maineconomicgrowth.com).



The Department of Economic and Community Development supports the use of the plan and the dashboard as a mechanism to “facilitate communications between constituents and stakeholders, the



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building of consensus around shared goals and the work of policy makers in planning investments and otherwise setting policy.” We would welcome additional language that would ensure that the legislature and policy makers use the Plan as a roadmap for priority setting and focus.

DECD also supports connecting the dashboard to the measures developed and regularly updated and revised by the Maine Economic Growth Council’s Measures of Growth measures and process. The Measures of Growth document is Maine’s annual report card on progress in key areas and the Growth Council has done good work in adapting the document to reflect connection between their measures and the vision, goals, and strategies outlined in the Plan.

We have concerns with a few of the details of the resolve and would more firmly support the resolve if these areas were changed.

1. The Measures of Growth indicators are lagging indicators in many cases, meaning that they reflect data from the past, often from over two years prior. The Measures of Growth is a fantastic tool as a long term “report card” for Maine but many of the indicators are not ones that lend themselves to more regular data updates as one might envision with a dashboard. While we do want to include these into a dashboard where possible, we do not want to limit the effort to the language currently in the resolve “the 2020 Measures of Growth Report.”
2. We do not want to limit this work to exclude the expertise and assets brought by the Maine Center for Business and Economic Research. This team is an integral part of the Plan’s implementation and tracking and is also used by several industry-led groups to inform their work. To build a nimble dashboard with regularly updated information, MCBER is a critical partner.
3. There will be a cost involved with this development and the resolve indicates that “the Economic Growth Council shall generate budgetary requirements and identify sources of funding for production and ongoing maintenance of the dashboard.” The Department has concerns about this language, particularly given that the cost of the Measures of Growth report already falls largely to the Department. If the Department is going to support the dashboard financially, our preference is to do so directly using the broader collaboration outlined above. The resolve does not fully envision the costs of such an effort, which should also include broader outreach and stakeholder engagement, to be used as broadly and effectively as possible. We are committed to working collaboratively and welcome the opportunity to further implement the effort already underway.
4. The language in the resolve indicating “It allows the council to consult and otherwise collaborate with a statewide development foundation to create the measures of progress and dashboard” narrows



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the concept of collaboration, given that the Economic Growth Council lives within the Maine Development Foundation, thus collaborating with itself. The Department defines collaboration much more expansively, to gather more voices and to avoid duplication of efforts.

5. The Maine Economic Growth Council is a complex organization and its effectiveness relies on regular reappointments of its members from both legislative and executive branch leadership and funding from DECD. If the legislature wants a completely apolitical lead to dashboard development and hosting, MCBER is the logical home. If this is not a consideration, then the Department itself, who is charged with Plan implementation, is the logical home.

Thank you and I would be happy to take any questions.