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Sen. Chip Curry Testimony Presenting
**LD 1517, “An Act To Establish the Maine Workforce, Research, Development
and Student Achievement Institute”**
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement
and Business*
April 27, 2021

Representative Roberts and Distinguished Colleagues on the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business Committee:

My name is Chip Curry. I am the State Senator for Senate District #11, which includes the 26 rural, coastal and island communities of Waldo County. I am pleased to present to you LD 1517, “An Act To Establish the Maine Workforce, Research, Development and Student Achievement Institute.” This bill is identical to a bill brought forth by then Representative Daughtry in the 129th Legislature, and I’m very glad to be bringing it before this committee once again.

This session, the IDEA committee is hearing dozens of bills that aim to foster a thriving and vibrant economy in our state. In the past few weeks, this committee has addressed: strategies for recruiting and retaining a workforce in our rural communities; scholarship and loan repayment programs for undergraduates nursing faculty and physicians; and regional development strategies for former military bases. We have also considered numerous budget items designed to support students, incubate innovative businesses, and promote international trade. The topic areas this committee is charged with addressing also overlap with many policy areas with which our colleagues in other committees are working, including building or adapting workforce housing options, increasing broadband access, expanding access to affordable high-quality childcare and promoting apprenticeships as a pathway to high quality jobs. These are all policy areas that impact economic development and workforce but often land within other committees.

Time and I again I have heard this committee ask for more data. We want to know if the program, tax credit, scholarship, or grant actually does the thing we hope it does. We want to know that we are neither missing a critical opportunity to move the state forward nor wasting the people of Maine’s hard-earned money on well-intentioned but misguided programs.

When Sen. Daughtry introduced her bill in the previous legislature, she noted her positive experience working with the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI), and all the information and policy research they were able to provide the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. LD 1517 seeks to use MEPRI as a model to establish a research institute focused on

the policy areas within this committee's jurisdiction: economic development, workforce, research, and student achievement.

By creating the Maine Workforce, Research, Development and Student Achievement Institute, LD 1517 will help us to answer the questions that are most pressing to this committee and equip us with more comprehensive information to do our jobs well. The Institute would provide credible objective research that will serve this committee and other parts of the Legislature as we craft policies that will make a real difference in Mainers' lives.

I thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have of me.