



Testimony of Executive Director, Ben Lucas

Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 1517: “An Act To Establish the Maine Workforce, Research, Development and Student Achievement Institute”

April 27th, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and members of the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business. 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 1517.

Maine has a serious workforce issue. We have an aging workforce and not enough young people staying or moving here. According to the Maine Center for Workforce Research and Information, the number of people in Maine over the age of 65 will increase by 113,000 in the next 5 years. In that same time period, the number of workers between the ages of 16-64 will decline by 31,000. 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 keep jobs in Maine. We believe LD 1517 could be one step in addressing the workforce crisis.

Creating the Maine Workforce, Research, Development and Student Achievement Institute would bring together a group of stakeholders, including those who are providing foundational jobs to Maine citizens. This would facilitate input from companies that employ thousands of hardworking Mainers. We believe bringing together individuals from different industries and backgrounds will lead to better and more efficient future workforce development legislation. That is a key component to helping solve our workforce issue. Having a comprehensive plan is

critical for the economic future and success of our state. Policy solutions should be strategic, long-range and connected to a long-term vision and plan for the future.

We also believe this legislation falls in line with Governor Mills 10-Year Economic Plan and the goal to attract 75,000 people to Maine's talent-pool. We thank Senator Curry for bringing this legislation forward. The Maine Jobs Council would welcome any opportunity to be involved with the institute and to be considered for the state-based organization involved in workforce and business policy and development that will be appointed by the Speaker and Senate President.

Thank you, I am happy to answer any questions now and I will be available for the work session.

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