



**Testimony by William Norbert
Governmental Affairs and Communications Manager**

In Support of L.D. 1517

***An Act to Establish the Maine Workforce, Research, Development and Student
Achievement Institute***

**Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development,
Economic Advancement and Business**

April 27, 2021

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business:

My name is Bill Norbert. I am the Governmental Affairs and Communications Manager at the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME). I live in Brunswick and am pleased to testify in favor of L.D. 1517, *An Act to Establish the Maine Workforce, Research, Development and Student Achievement Institute*.

This bill would establish the Maine Workforce, Research, Development and Student Achievement Institute and a related steering committee to advise the Legislature on matters related to workforce training, research and development, student debt and economic advancement in the state. We think this is a good idea that could provide great benefit to the state. We would be pleased to be a part of this important effort as a member of the steering committee.

We would like to thank Senator Curry and Senator Daughtry for bringing this idea forward. Two years ago we testified in support of a very similar bill sponsored by Senator Daughtry.

As you know, FAME provides financial solutions that help Maine people achieve their business and higher education goals. In addition to our commercial financing products, we offer a variety of student grant, loan, and loan repayment programs, as well as extensive financial education and outreach efforts. We help to create a Maine workforce that with good-paying jobs by focusing on the nexus of economic and educational development. Maine's workforce needs are pressing, as is the related and interconnected challenge of student debt. FAME cares deeply about these issues and wishes to be of help.

We think it would be useful to have a well-respected and trusted public entity, in this case the University of Maine, collect and analyze information related to workforce training, research and development, student debt and economic advancement in the state, as well as to make policy recommendations to the Legislature and to conduct targeted research for the Legislature. We would welcome the opportunity to be part of that effort.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.