



**Alison Sucey, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Government Affairs,
on Behalf of the Maine Tourism Association**

In Support Of

LD 1198, Resolve, Directing the Department of Economic and Community Development to Convene a Working Group to Improve the State's 10-year Economic Development Strategy

April 4, 2023

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

My name is Alison Sucey and I am the Chief Operating Officer and Director of Government Affairs for the Maine Tourism Association. The Maine Tourism Association is the state's largest tourism organization and the only one supporting members in every type of tourism business such as lodging, restaurants, campgrounds, retail, outdoor recreation, guides, tour operators, amusements, and historical and cultural attractions. For over 100 years, we've been promoting Maine and our nearly 1500 members. We also operate, on behalf of the state, seven State Visitor Information Centers from Kittery to Calais. I present this testimony in favor of LD 1198.

The Resolve states that the working group should focus on creating and retaining "jobs that add economic value or bring in money from outside the State." Clearly the tourism industry is key to this. Not only does tourism support jobs in Maine and bring in visitors, tourism is critical to introducing people to the state—people who then want to relocate here, start a business, and further contribute to our community and economy. As the Maine Office of Tourism's recently released 2022 data shows:

- Tourism supports 151,000 jobs in Maine
- Every 102 visitors support a new job in Maine
- Tourists spend more than \$8.6 billion in Maine
- Total economic impact of tourism in Maine is \$15.8 billion

We believe that a working group representing top industries such as tourism (one of largest private industries in the state) can provide valuable information and feedback on the goals and implementation of the 10-year plan.

The Maine Tourism Association has had a Workforce Development department for over 5 years and has created an industry-wide career center with other tourism partners. We are also coordinating with educational providers--high schools, the Maine Community College System, other higher educational institutions, JMG, and others--to raise awareness and connect our young people with careers opportunities in Maine. We do this through school visits, field trips to tourism businesses, internships, and career pathways information for all segments of the tourism industry.

By establishing a working group our efforts, and those of other businesses and organizations, can better be coordinated with the state's efforts in these areas to ensure the most effective use of resources. I respectfully ask that you vote in favor of LD 1198. Thank you for your time and consideration of our testimony.