



Testimony of Executive Director, Ben Lucas

Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 1047, “An Act To Create an Alternate Minimum Wage Applicable to Student Employees Who Are under 20 Years of Age and to Employees Who Are under 18 Years of Age”

April 12th, 2021

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing, 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 1047.

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. Maine needs to act urgently to develop a long term plan that helps our workforce and keep jobs in Maine, we believe LD 1047 could be a step in the right direction to keep young people in Maine and get them to work.

Foundational jobs exist in industries such as manufacturing, construction, farming, fishing, forestry, transportation, and energy. They add value, create wealth, and pay for service and public sector jobs. Foundational jobs require having a skilled workforce. LD 1047 would create a consistent wage for students and this could enhance apprenticeships, integrate work with education, and refocus the K-12 educational system. Not all students are destined for four-year colleges yet that has been the focus of most K-12 education. Maine needs an overall strategic

plan for the attraction of foundational jobs that can inform the educational system about future employment opportunities and needed skills.

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. Maine is facing a workforce crisis and LD 1047 takes steps to make sure that students living in Maine are given the opportunity to get to work quickly, make a fair wage, and stay in Maine rather than leaving. We encourage this committee to pass the legislation.

Thank you.

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