Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

Laura A. Fortman
COMMISSIONER

January 27, 2022

Senator Matthea Daughtry
Representative Michael Sylvester
Members of the Labor and Housing Committee

Dear Senator Daughtry, Representative Sylvester, and Members of the Labor and Housing Committee:

The morning of the work session held on Wednesday, January 19th regarding LD 898, An Act To Provide Incentives to Unemployed Workers To Become Part of the Caregiver Workforce, the sponsor submitted an amendment which replaces bill, originally a concept draft, and assigns a new title: An Act to Create the Essential Support Workforce Advisory Committee. The amendment establishes the Essential Support Workforce Advisory Committee to advise the Legislature, Governor and executive branch agencies on the essential support workforce shortage.

Because the scope of the sponsor amendment is different from that previously considered by the Labor and Housing Committee, the amendment was tabled and rescheduled for the work session on Monday, January 31st.

Prior to tabling the amendment, Representative Sylvester requested a brief summary of the various programs being administered by the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Therefore, DOL and DHHS collaborated on a document to outline these programs, speak to who these programs impact, describe the intended impact, what metrics and data will be collected, and provide timelines tied to each program.

Representatives from DOL and DHHS will be present in the work session to help elucidate these programs and answer any additional questions that may stem from this discussion.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Dillon Murray
Legislative Liaison
Department of Labor

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Direct care legislation

Initiative: Campaign to promote direct care careers (DOL; DHHS)	
Anticipated timeline: Campaign roll-out during late February-April 2022	
What's being done?	• DOL is working closely with DHHS to lead the first of a three-phased media campaign to recruit persons of all ages and life stages into front line health and long term services work. • With funding from the Governor's Maine Jobs and Recovery Program (MJRP) DOL has retained a marketing agency for this phase of the work. • An advisory group includes representatives from the Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, Catholic Charities Maine, LeadingAge, the Maine Council on Aging, the Maine Health Care Association, the Maine Association of Community Service Providers and the Home Care & Hospice Alliance of Maine. The group has provided input on key messaging and assisted DOL with reaching other stakeholders through surveys and other methods to increase our understanding of motivations, barriers, and aspirations of current and potential direct care and support workers. • The campaign is also informed by work done in the fall of 2021 by the Long Term Care Ombudsman who hosted discussion groups with direct care and support workers to learn more about their jobs, why they do them and what would make them better. • Media from this campaign, a website launch with worker testimonials and worker recruitment events are all slated for coming months (February-April 2022).
Who is it impacting?	Target communities (per legislation) among jobseeker audience include: • Men • People living with disabilities • Younger adults • Older adults • New residents of Maine • Communities of color As well as healthcare employers of direct care & behavioral health staff.
What's the intended impact?	• Increased number of individuals in direct care & BH jobs—particularly among target audiences. • Increased awareness of direct care and behavioral health careers. • Elevated perception and appreciation of the importance of direct care & behavioral health jobs.
How will it be measured?	• Campaign reach: Web visits, advertising impressions, conversion to training or job site visits. • Individuals enrolled in relevant training programs and jobs: Tracking website impressions and the number of individuals who enter thru campaign & register for a training, internship, credential or apply for a job. • Employer satisfaction: Collected via survey to understand if new hires or connections are made due to campaign.

Initiative: Tuition remission (DOL; DHHS)

What's being done?	• The Training for Incumbent Health Workers (tuition remission) program will help people who work in the health care field gain skills and advance with their employer by providing financial support to attain advanced health care credentials. • The program lowers barriers to training and education by providing the training free of charge to interested employees – as opposed to tuition reimbursement which requires upfront, out-of-pocket spending. • Further, by investing in training and credential attainment for incumbent frontline health care workers, the program will help improve retention rates and increase the average wage among health care workers. • The program will work with employers across provider types and sizes—including physical, oral and behavioral health. The program will initially focus on technical training and may eventually also support emerging needs for foundational skills education, English Language Learning, and credential evaluation to support workers from priority communities (such as New Mainers, those with lower educational attainment, or those with additional barriers to next-level credential attainment).
Who is it impacting?	• Incumbent healthcare workers in clinical roles—including direct care workers, Home and Community Based Setting, staff, and others in physical, oral or behavioral health roles. • Primary focus on entry-level workers attaining next-level credentials.
What's the intended impact?	• Increased participation in & completion of upskilling credentials. • Increased average wage among healthcare workers. • Increased worker retention.
How will it be measured?	• Wage increased and retention will be measured via quarterly wage match reports. • Training participation, completion and credential attainment will be capture via employer or provider surveys.

Initiative: Training For Me (DOL; DHHS; DOE; MCCS; UMS)

Anticipated timeline: Launch by early March 2022

What's being done?	• Creating a centralized location to access healthcare trainings and training supports at shared landing page—Training for Me. • Shared landing page will feature broad swath of healthcare offerings occurring in upcoming months across different educational & training providers and systems as well as provide a quick intake assessment form for employers or individual learners to indicate their preferences and supports needed. • This intake assessment will be evaluated by DOL or MCCS staff charged at triaging requests for healthcare training support and identifying the best training offerings as well as funding sources, and supportive services (as relevant) to meet training needs—to create a "no wrong door" approach across the system. • This "no wrong door" approach will also connect individual learners to navigators across the system to provide more direct support in career navigation or referral to supportive services to ensure learners can persist and complete trainings.
Who is it impacting?	• Healthcare employers looking to invest in worker training and certification. • Incumbent healthcare workers in physical, oral or behavioral health roles.

	• Primary focus will be on entry-level workers attaining next-level credentials. • Individuals laid off from healthcare careers and looking to re-enter the field or individuals brand new to the healthcare field.
What's the intended impact?	• More coordinated and seamless experience for learners and employer to access training resources—increasing enrollments *(intended reach of partnership is to serve ~2000-2500 individuals annually over next 3 years)*. • Increased participation in & completion of upskilling credentials. • Increased average wage among healthcare workers. • Increased worker retention.
How will it be measured?	• Applications for training requests and enrollments will be tracked by the partnership as well as employer satisfaction with the coordinated approach via survey outreach effort. • Wage increased and retention will be measured via quarterly wage match reports. • Training participation, completion and credential attainment will be capture via employer or provider surveys. • Progress of this effort will be tracked and regularly reported to Workforce Cabinet.

Initiative: Healthcare career navigators (DOL)	
Anticipated timeline: Currently interviewing for positions, anticipated launch February/March 2022	
What's being done?	• DOL is hiring two full-time Health Care Career Navigators to provide customized career guidance – including the creation of person-specific employment and training plans, help navigating available training opportunities, assistance with evaluation and translation of prior credentials, and referrals for health care job and apprenticeship opportunities – to help introduce people into health care jobs. These navigators will be housed within the Maine Department of Labor's CareerCenters and will work closely with employers and community-based partners to connect jobseekers with opportunities. Navigators will also help out-of-state and foreign-trained professionals translate credentials, access licensing, and learn how prior training may apply to health care jobs in Maine.
Who is it impacting?	• Incumbent healthcare workers. • Individuals interested in healthcare professions. • Supporting foreign-trained health care workers to successfully be recredentialed and/or move to a related health care occupation. • Healthcare employers.
What's the intended impact?	• Increase number of individuals connected to healthcare training or jobs (including individuals newly or re-employed). • Increase support of healthcare employers' workforce-related challenges.
How will it be measured?	• All individuals served by healthcare career navigators will be captured in MaineJobLink to track connections to training & education offerings, completion rates, employment outcomes, including wage growth.

Initiative: Healthcare pre-apprenticeship & apprenticeship (DOL)
Anticipated timeline: Apprenticeship programs developed on ongoing basis via Maine Apprenticeship Program support, driven by employer demand; RFA to expand apprenticeship via MJRP funds is live w/ contracts awarded in March 2022 (through December 2024)

What's being done?	• Utilizing a combination of Maine Jobs and Recovery Program (MJRP) funds and a federal grant, DOL is actively expanding healthcare pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs for the sector at large, with an emphasis on increasing representation within apprenticeship programs among communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. • DOL has been working with DHHS, as well as the Maine community college system and the Department of Education's (DOE) Career and Technical Education team. • Current apprenticeship sponsors include Northern Light Health, Pen Bay Medical Center, Clover Healthcare, MaineGeneral Health, Lincoln Health and Maine General Health. The MJRP and federal grant funds allow for expansion of healthcare pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs via grant funding to interested employers, industry associations, labor unions, education and training providers, and community-based organizations.
Who is it impacting?	• Healthcare employers looking to implement earn-and-learn models • Specific focus on increasing representation in pre-apprenticeship & apprenticeship programs among BIPOC communities, women, justice-involved workers, and people with disabilities.
What's the intended impact?	• Increased number of employers offering registered apprenticeship programs. • Increased number of apprentices in Maine. • Increased wages among participating apprentices and retention with employer.
How will it be measured?	• The Maine Apprenticeship Program collects and reports to federal partners quarterly—program participation (apprentices, sponsors, programs) and annually tracks and reports on apprentice completion, wage growth and retention, as well as demographics of apprentices.

Initiative: Benefits Cliff Calculator (DHHS)	
Anticipated timeline: Training for the staff participating in the pilot is scheduled for February 2022. Staff will utilize the tool for a three-month period after which an evaluation will be conducted. Evaluation results will be available in June of 2022 and wider spread distribution of the tool will occur later in 2022.	
What's being done?	• In partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, a Maine specific benefits cliff calculator (or dashboard) tool has been developed for launch in 2022. This dashboard will demonstrate to users (with assistance from their trained case managers or coaches) how various careers can impact their household income and public benefits over time.
Who is it impacting?	• Individuals working with case managers or coaches on education and employment planning will be impacted. The pilot services will be offered to individuals receiving services through existing programs and will include for example, TANF recipients, and job seekers. Education institutions will receive students who are better prepared for success due to their informed decision making. Employers will receive employees who are well trained and prepared for sustainable employment. Policy makers will be able to see the long-run public returns and net taxpayer savings to career advancement.
What's the intended impact?	• Individuals can make informed decisions on career paths that will lead to better economic outcomes for their families.

How will it be measured?	• Development of an evaluation plan of the pilot is currently in process. Upon statewide launch in 2022, organizations utilizing the tool will measure outcomes through existing performance measurement efforts. This will include reporting on education attainment, employment, and wage growth and retention.

Initiative: Stackable credentials (DHHS)	
Anticipated timeline: The stackable credential pilot with the University of Maine at Fort Kent is underway. A curriculum designer Limited Period Position has been established via MJRP funds (through December 2024)	
What's being done?	• DHHS, in collaboration with USM Muskie, is assessing existing curricula tied to direct care worker credentials. The goal is to establish a baseline credential that will be portable across provider types. This will allow direct care workers to expand their knowledge base, as well as allow them to provide staffing to a broader segment of the population needing direct care. This baseline credential will be layered with additional specialty training such as dementia care, depending on the specific need of the population receiving services. • DHHS is also engaged with Adult Education, the University of Maine System and the Community College System to align learning standards with provider needs. The goal is to build stackable credentials which allow the worker to grow their career, and attain degrees targeted to mid and senior level positions. One pilot at the University of Maine at Fort Kent will enable UMFK nursing students to earn certification as a Personal Support Specialist (PSS) in year 1, a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) in year 2, and a Certified Residential Medication Aide (CRMA) in year 3 as they work on their nursing degrees. This will allow nursing students to engage in paid work in different capacities along the continuum as they move through their degree program.
Who is it impacting?	• Direct care workers • Students in allied health programs such as nursing and social work.
What's the intended impact?	• By creating a career pathway with stackable credentials, direct care workers will be able to expand their skill set and earning potential. This will improve retention in the field. • By stacking credentials within degree programs such as nursing or social work, students will be able to work within their scope of license in direct care roles such as Personal Support Specialist, Behavioral Health Professional, and others.
How will it be measured?	• Development of an evaluation plan is currently in process. This will include reporting on credential attainment, employment, and retention.