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**LD 542, 'An Act to Provide Support Services for Military Members Transitioning to Civilian Life
in Maine'**

Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

March 8, 2021

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and honorable members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee – my name is David Richmond, and I am the Director of the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services. I am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 542.

As you well know, Maine offers our military veterans and their families a wealth of benefits and resources. Those benefits assist veterans wishing to continue their education, access health care, enjoy Maine's outdoor offerings, and enhance employment opportunities.

Whether unemployed, underemployed, or transitioning from Active Duty to civilian life, the Bureau and our many community partners work with veterans on an individual basis to connect them with the best opportunities available. The Maine Department of Labor is one of our largest partners in the veteran advocacy space. With 12 Career Centers located across Maine, DOL's Veterans' Outreach Program Representatives and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives stand ready to assist any veteran who walks through their doors needing employment services. MDOL also conducts outreach to veterans' organizations in Maine and across the country. These organizations make referrals of veterans who want to move to Maine or those who simply need services who already reside here. And, through their Maine Hire-A-Vet campaign, MDOL reaches thousands of veterans and family members across the country. Veterans can receive help with their job search, resume writing, and interview skills.

The Maine Bureau of Veterans Services is also coordinating with the Department of Economic and Community Development, Maine Department of Labor, the federal Department of Defense and other government and private partners to find ways we can market Maine to transitioning service members. It's our goal to connect with service members who may be considering Maine as their new home, and to provide them with information about the services that can assist them in the transition from Active Duty to civilian life. Of particular note, our Military Bureau has identified recruiting as an emerging issue for the Maine National Guard. They routinely enlist former active duty military members into the guard. Any effort to expand this pool of potential recruits is welcome by our Department.

In a previous version of this bill, our bureau collaborated with DECD and the sponsor to arrive at a plan that was agreed on by all. Our department will be supportive of the bill if these amendments are added and will be happy to assist in any way we can to ensure our veterans are adequately served and connected with the best employment and transition services. However, if our Department or Bureau is responsible for administering

the proposed program and funds, we could not absorb the workload in our Bureau without impacting other higher priority programs.

I thank you for taking the time to hear testimony on this important topic and look forward to working with you further. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Respectfully,
David A. Richmond
Director, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services