

Karen Garland-Kidder
FARMINGTON

Testimony Before the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Labor and Housing
February 25, 2021

Senators Breen and Rafferty, Representatives Pierce and Sylvester, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Labor and Housing,

My name is Karen Garland-Kidder, I am a resident of Farmington, I am a Registered Nurse, a New Ventures Maine program graduate, and I currently serve as a volunteer on the New Ventures Maine Advisory Council as a representative for other program graduates. I am submitting this testimony in support of New Ventures Maine's (NVME) General Fund allocation within the University of Maine System's (UMS) biennial budget request for fiscal years 2022 and 2023.

When I first went to New Ventures Maine, I was a stay-at-home mom with two young children. I was contemplating my future career path and decided to enroll in NVME's My Next Career Move class to help me explore my career options. This helped me to look at my options and explore careers that might appeal to my personality and interests. It opened my eyes to new possibilities. After completing the class, I immediately enrolled in the pre-nursing program at UMA. NVME also provided financial guidance and directed me to their Family Development Account and their 4:1 match helped to pay for my college tuition. NVME taught me the importance of money management and asset building, helping me to become more financially secure.

Since receiving my Associate's Degree in nursing from UMA, I have held many roles in the field of nursing. I am currently an RN, Clinical Program Coordinator with Healthy Community Coalition at Franklin Community Health Network. I have continued my education by completing some of the pre-requisites at UMA towards a Bachelor's in Nursing.

In these unprecedented times, the social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our communities has been strenuous and I have been thankful for my ability to contribute my skill set to the response. The following are a few highlights of ways I have utilized not only my nursing skills but also many of the personal tools developed through New Ventures Maine programs to support my community through the pandemic:

- Coordinating the expansion of our local EMS service's Community Paramedicine program to include a comprehensive referral and communication process, in-home lab draws for patients, COVID-19 swabbing, Telehealth assistance and administration of flu vaccines.
- Working in the COVID-19 swabbing clinic, testing community members for the virus and in the vaccination clinic administering the Moderna vaccine to Maine residents.
- Conducting calls to local elderly residents who have been identified as being at risk for isolation.
- Assisted with the distribution of thousands of boxes of food to community members through the Farmers to family initiative.

Before NVME my family was in debt and receiving state assistance. Because of NVME, I have obtained a college degree, I am a first-generation college graduate and have broken the cycle of generational poverty. NVME has helped me to be more financially secure and understand the importance of asset building. NVME invests in people, so they invest in themselves, their communities, and their future.

I am one of many individuals that has benefited from NVME's investments that also impact Maine families and Maine communities. I strongly urge you to invest in them to provide the services to help advance the financial well-being of Maine families and build a strong economy for Maine communities.

Thank you.

Karen Garland-Kidder