



Testimony to the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs & Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business

In Support of Funding in L.D. 221, the “Biennial Budget Bill” for the Maine Development Foundation

February 24, 2021

Good Afternoon Senator Breen, Representative Pierce, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement & Business. I come before you today in support of the budget proposal for the Maine Development Foundation. My name is Molly Woodward and I am the sitting Chair of the Realize Maine Network Steering Committee.

I personally, have many years of service under the Maine Development Foundation in both local groups under both Realize Maine and the Maine Downtown Center. I can personally attest to the work these groups do at a high level and how that work trickles down peppering our great State of Maine with opportunities of growth to our social, economic, and environmental equity. Today, I'd like to highlight Realize Maine Network's work with young professionals across the State of Maine, pulling at each end of the State to tie together individuals who work toward this goal of growth, together.

At the heart of Maine Development Foundation, you will find the philosophy of: Trusted Research, Leadership Development, and Creative Partnership. This philosophy is exemplified through the work of MDF's Realize Maine Network. The Realize Maine Network Steering Committee is comprised of six regional groups all supported by the umbrella organization using the funding provided here and decided by your committee. The support to and for these individual organizations is so vital to the expansion of our State with each of these individual organizations upholding the MDF Philosophy.

Together the organizations reach over 10,000 individuals using social media to influence professional development, togetherness, but most importantly the benefits of living and working within the various regions of Maine. Participants of Realize Maine Network Steering Committee consist of the future of Maine professional services Bankers, Lawyers, Accountants, Non-Profit Professionals, Real Estate Agents, Car Dealers, Entrepreneurs, Plumbers, Teachers, and Medical professionals. Interaction with these young people now through this organization builds the love of this great state so we can continue to foster the love of our state to engage these individuals to settle their profession here building and contributing to the tax base.

RMNSC has seen continued growth even through the past year with challenges brought by Covid-19. In fact, these groups continue to flex their ingenuity and the spirit of leadership by adapting to virtual meetings and events. Additionally, a new theme that seemed to arise from the pandemic are outdoor activities. Beyond the group sports activities which engage the thousands of individuals these groups have reached in the past; leadership of these groups have invested time to environmental assets of Maine. Stretching from the mountains for skiing and snow shoeing trails to our local parks for outdoor



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group exercises like yoga and nature walks these groups have not missed a beat with continuing engagement and showcasing the best Maine has to offer.

Celebrating more than \$6,000 in contributions to local non-profits, professional development through networking seeing countless promotions and leadership award recognition, on top of countless social and family events Realize Maine Network continues to attract new leadership and young professionals to the region. The effects of the work done at Realize Maine Network is felt within the Maine Development Foundation again as the investment in the future of Maine. Your continued financial support of the requested \$33,000 to MDF will allow this work to expand through the mini grants awarded to these organizations and scholarships to more than five different leadership education series provided by MDF to RMN Participants.

This investment pays in rich dividends to our regions across the state working together to build on the overall goal to make Maine the destination to live work and play. Your support of Maine Development Foundation is vital to the continuation of the success of these efforts continuing over the next two years. I appreciate your time and attention today.

Respectfully,

Molly A. Woodward

Chair- Realize Maine Steering Committee

(207) 616-9870