

May 16, 2019

Support “small cell” infrastructure investment in Maine

EDITOR’S NOTE: The following Special to the Portland Press Herald was written by Ben Gilman, general counsel for the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, and published on Tuesday, May 14, 2019. It can be accessed online at pressherald.com/2019/05/14/commentary-support-small-cell-infrastructure-investment-in-maine. We have reprinted it here for your review.

Over the past seven years, the wireless industry has invested nearly \$100 million each year to improve service in the state of Maine. This laudable and necessary effort has helped to keep our state moving forward and enabled Maine’s residents and businesses to capitalize on new opportunities.

One such opportunity could be better facilitated by LD 1517, a bill sponsored by Rep. Teresa Pierce to bring enhanced wireless service to a broader swath of Maine through the use of an important wireless technology called “small cells.” Small cells, which are unobtrusive antennas that attach to utility poles along roads and highways, boost capacity and speed of mobile wireless service, allowing for better coverage and faster downloads. These devices can also greatly expand capacity for consumers in congested areas.

Today, people are consuming more and more wireless data on more and more devices. Researchers have found that the number of connected devices in the United States is 180 million and growing. Total mobile data traffic is projected to grow to 49 gigabytes in 2023 – nearly a seven-fold increase from 2017. Cisco projects that by 2021, networks will be strained when smart devices are expected to account for three-quarters of all devices

connected to a mobile network – generating 98 percent of mobile data traffic.

Consumer demand for data has grown and will continue to increase exponentially as the technology of tomorrow becomes part of our daily lives. Small cells can help by enhancing service and preparing a community’s network for future increases in demand.

But the benefits extend beyond today.

Small cells will form the backbone for eventual 5G service and the next generation of technology. Investment in these new technologies holds exciting prospects for communities, public safety, businesses, entrepreneurs, schools and students.

For example, with the additional capacity provided by small cells, new wireless technologies will enable advances in artificial intelligence, connected cars, smart infrastructure and telemedicine. They will connect things like lighting, water utilities, parking, public transportation and more to the internet – saving money, preserving natural resources and fostering more connected communities.

5G and smart cities technology are expected to have a positive impact on economic development, whether it is by

Continued on Page 2...

Legislators and business leaders discuss session’s progress

— **Financial impact report indicates legislation’s effect will ultimately add costs to small businesses**

On Tuesday evening, May 14, the Maine State Chamber convened a group of legislative leaders and its board of directors to discuss key pieces of legislation and the progress of the current session. With approximately a month to go before statutory adjournment (June 19), legislators are working hard to meet legislative deadlines. To that end, committees are holding many, lengthy public hearings and work sessions, and both the House and Senate are moving bills through the process (see page 8).

Our panel of legislative leaders included Senate President Troy Jackson (D-Aroostook), Senate Republican Leader Dana Dow (R-Lincoln), House Majority Leader Matt Moonen (D-Portland), and Assistant House Minority Leader Trey Stewart (R-Presque Isle). Additional key legislators and administrators joined the evening’s program, including Rep. Seth Berry (D-Bowdoinham); Rep. Richard Bradstreet (R-Vassalboro); Sen. Stacey Guerin (R-Penobscot); Sen. Lisa Keim (R-Oxford); Laura Fortman,

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About the Maine State Chamber of Commerce: Since 1889, the Maine State Chamber has been fighting to lower your cost of doing business. Through our Grassroots Action Network and OneVoice program, we work with a network of approximately 5,000 companies statewide who see the value in such a service and provide the financial support that keeps our access, advocacy, and assistance efforts going strong. As Maine's Chamber, we make sure that the business environment of the state continues to thrive. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce advocates on behalf of their interests before the legislature and regulatory agencies and through conferences, seminars, and affiliated programs.

Governor Mills releases budget change package for fiscal year 2019

The Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations held a public hearing on Wednesday, May 15 which focused on Governor Janet Mills' Budget Change Package for FY 2019. Items in the change package include changes that could improve Maine's child welfare system, repair school infrastructure, pay down debt, and add more funds to the state's "rainy day" fund. Change packages are often used to make necessary adjustments to previously approved budgets. The Governor's change package includes the following proposals to:

- ♦ Pay off debt for Riverview Psychiatric Center;
- ♦ Hire new staff for the Office of Child and Family Services;
- ♦ Add \$5.5 million for opioid prevention programs;
- ♦ Add \$20 million for school renovation projects; and,
- ♦ Place \$20 million in the Budget Stabilization Fund, often called the "rainy day" fund.

State Revenues Continue to Look Good...

As the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations continues to work through the State's 2020-2021 Biennial Budget, committee members recently received some additional good news. The State's Revenue Forecasting Committee (RFC) recently revised its revenue projections for the General Fund Fiscal Year 2019

upward by \$66.7 million, over 6.9% of FY18's amounts. The RFC also revised State revenues for FY20 by \$13.2 million and for FY21 by \$7.5 million. Revenues continue to come in ahead of projections, which indicates Maine's economy along with the rest of the U.S. economy is still going strong. The RFC's report attributes most of this additional revenue is from one-time income or tax avoidance actions taken by taxpayers because of the enactment of the Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which contained provisions in it dealing with repatriation and other base erosion provisions. The RFC indicated this is likely one-time money. The report noted other adjustments to revenues including a decrease in the cigarette and tobacco tax revenues of \$3.5 million and an increase in the estate tax revenues of \$4.5 million.

Other Revenues and Projections...

Estimates for the highway fund have been revised upward as well, by \$4.8 million for FY19. Projections for FY20 and FY21 were changed by minor amounts. The report also revised the forecast for wage and salary employment upwards by 0.1% and left future years unchanged. The report also projects the employment figure to reach 633,100 by 2020 and projects it to remain there through 2021-2023.

If you have any questions taxation or the state's budget process, please contact Linda Caprara by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 106, or by emailing lcaprara@mainechamber.org. □

Small Cell Infrastructure... (Continued from Page 1...)

creating jobs, giving entrepreneurs new resources, enabling investment in infrastructure or empowering employers and employees to work and think differently through things like telework, videoconferencing or streamlined operations.

Ultimately, the possible innovations of the future are endless, and states that embrace forward-thinking foundation projects like small-cell installation will be

leaders in crafting that future.

This is where we see the greatest opportunity for Maine – to give our people the tools needed to succeed and lead in the digital age.

Elected officials can facilitate this future by clarifying and streamlining the approval process for small-cell deployment. LD 1517 does just that, and we encourage our legislators to support this effort.

From Portland to Presque Isle, growth, opportunity and innovation can flourish if we facilitate wireless infrastructure investment today. □

Labor committee takes first step with workers' comp bills

Work session defeats some, tables others

At the Labor and Housing committee's long-awaited first work session on the more than 20 workers' compensation bills, the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing began the process of sorting through the bills they want to focus on and killed off the proposals that they didn't.

The following unanimously received "ought-not-to-pass" reports:

- ♦ **LD 298** (presumption of compensability for heart disease for corrections workers);
- ♦ **LD 312** (to prohibit minimum premiums);
- ♦ **LD 819** (enhancing predetermination of independent contractors);
- ♦ **LD 901** (statute of limitations);
- ♦ **LD 1203** (retirement presumption);
- ♦ **LD 1205** (allowing full retirement benefits);
- ♦ **LD 1501** (occupational disease); and,
- ♦ **LD 1624** (to prevent discrimination).

In addition, several bills remain alive for further consideration, including:

- ♦ **LD 580** (advocate pay study);
- ♦ **LD 600** (mental health parity);
- ♦ **LD 601** (cost of living adjustments);
- ♦ **LD 756** (omnibus placeholder);
- ♦ **LD 758** (work search requirement changes);
- ♦ **LD 809** (under the influence disqualification expansion);
- ♦ **LD 947** (notice);
- ♦ **LD 1095** (lien limitation);
- ♦ **LD 1204** (max benefit rate);
- ♦ **LD 1253** (death benefit claims);
- ♦ **LD 1385** (corrections officers' supplemental benefit and presumption for infectious and cardiovascular disease);
- ♦ **LD 1500** (uninsured injured workers);
- ♦ **LD 1600** (PTSD presumption for 9-1-1 and corrections officers); and,
- ♦ **LD 1625** (durational cap for permanent impairment).

All these bills were tabled, pending further action at work session scheduled for Monday, May 20. Clearly, there are more than enough workers' comp bills remaining to be dealt with next week. It was strongly suggested by committee co-chair Sen. Shenna Bellows (D-Kennebec) that, of the remaining bills, the max rate and durational limits were of utmost importance. Committee co-chair Rep. Michael Sylvester (D-Portland) indicated that he would be seeking to include correctional officers and 9-1-1 dispatchers in the PTSD claims study, which is due to the committee in 2022 (part of the sunset on the previously enacted PTSD presumption bill for first responders).

It is unclear what, if anything, will happen on May 20. It appears the committee is poised to perhaps send out a package of bills as a single omnibus bill, but whether this happens on Monday, May 20, or at a later date, is yet to be determined.

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce is following events in this policy area extremely closely and will be present at the meeting on May 20. For additional information or question, please contact Peter Gore by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 107, or by emailing pgore@mainechamber.org. □

Funding to expand the University of Maine System's capacity included in Governor Mills' FY 20-21 budget

This investment will address critical state workforce needs, while lowering student debt

Governor Janet Mills' FY 20-21 budget includes new funding that will expand the University of Maine System's capacity to address critical state workforce needs, while lowering student debt. The budget proposes a three-percent increase in the University of Maine System's base funding in each year of the budget, as well as targeted investments in early college and adult degree completion. Similar increases are proposed for the Maine Community College System and the Maine Maritime Academy.

Despite increases that have averaged just 1.4 percent annually over the past five years, the University has reduced the inflation-adjusted cost of in-state tuition in that same time period and driven the debt of its graduates 30 percent below the national average. Campuses in Augusta, Fort Kent, Machias, and Presque Isle now guarantee that qualified, Pell-eligible students will pay no out-of-pocket tuition and mandatory fees.

The increases proposed in the Governor's budget allow the University to further advance college affordability for Maine families with the greatest need without compromising student services and supports. If fully funded, the University will make available a record \$93.3 million investment in direct student aid in the coming academic year.

"Our workforce challenge is the defining issue of our time," said Educate Maine Executive Director Ed Cervone. "The funding recommendations for the University System will make college an affordable option for more Maine people while also bringing more talent to our state to grow our economy and our communities."

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Summit Follow-Up... (Continued from Page 1...)

Commissioner of the Maine Department of Labor; Kimberly Smith, Deputy Commissioner of the Maine Department of Labor; Barry Hobbins, Public Advocate; and, Jeremy Kennedy, Chief of Staff for Governor Janet Mills.

After dinner, the legislative panelists responded to questions posed by our board officers on a range of issues stemming from the 2018 report, *Making Maine Work: Critical Investments for Maine's Economy*. The 2018 report presented top public policy priorities based a comprehensive review of prior studies and plans regarding the Maine economy; the input of dozens of experts; and a survey which represented the voices of more than 1,000 Maine business and professional leaders. The top issues of focus were the costs of health insurance; the availability of professional workers; high-speed internet services; availability of skilled technical workers; availability of entry-level workers; energy costs, Maine's transportation system; and, Maine-based research and development. While some questions garnered passionate responses at times, other questions were met with a spirit of consensus.

There are many individual bills before the legislature that are concerning for businesses across the state, regardless of size or sector. However, it is their collective impact that should be most concerning to legislators, administrators, and employers. To better understand that impact, the Maine State Chamber asked Michael LeVert of Stepwise Data Research to develop an analytical model to estimate the cumulative financial impact of the following initiatives on Maine businesses:

- ♦ The minimum wage increase from \$11 to \$12 scheduled for January 1, 2020;
- ♦ A proposal to require companies of 10 employees or more to provide paid sick time for eligible employees at the rate of 1 hour for every 40 hours worked;
- ♦ A proposal to increase the annual salary level at which employees

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Summit Follow-Up...
(Continued from Page 4...)

become exempt from overtime pay to \$55,224 in 2022, from roughly \$33,000 today;

- ◆ A proposal to eliminate the cap on weekly indemnity benefits for workers compensation; and,
- ◆ A proposal to establish an annual cost of living adjustment for total and partial incapacity benefits under workers compensation.

In his closing remarks at the May 14 dinner, board chair Larry Wold of TD Bank noted: “While many variables go into these calculations, there’s one very clear conclusion – the small business community carries the heaviest load of this impact! For some, that means a potential cost increase of 15%. Don’t forget, 60% of Maine businesses employ fewer than five people, and 75% employ fewer than 10. No matter how you slice it, Maine is indeed a small business state by anyone’s definition!”

The report is currently available by emailing melanieb@mainechamber.org. The Maine State Chamber’s board, staff, and members look forward to working with legislators and Governor Mills in the remaining final weeks of this session to minimize, as much as possible, the cumulative effect of these proposals. □



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The budget also proposes a \$3.1 million investment over the biennium to expand early college access. Early college programs allow Maine high school students to earn college credit at little or no cost to their families. Participating students are more likely to graduate, apply and be admitted to college, and complete their degree on-time and with less debt.

An additional \$4.1 million will support Maine's 200,000 plus adults with some college but no degree to return to realize their full potential – and earning power – while meeting the growing needs of Maine employers for workers with a four-year or advanced degree. Funds will be used to develop flexible adult credentials and courses to accommodate working adults' schedules, as well as pilot small debt forgiveness program to remove financial barriers that too often prevent adults from returning to college and earning that door-opening degree.

Both of these investments help the University move Maine toward the State's goal of 60 percent of Maine workers holding some post-secondary degree or credential that positions them for success by 2025.

"The University's efforts to keep costs down for tuition-paying students and for the taxpayer, while expanding access affordably, is impressive. There is no greater return on our investment than increasing appropriations for the University of Maine System and the need to invest in it for the future workforce that they develop, has never been greater," said Kennebec Savings Bank President/CEO Andrew Silsby, who chairs the University of Maine at Augusta Board of Visitors.

As thousands of jobs go unfilled due to a size and skills gap in the state's workforce, the Maine State Chamber believes investing in the state's public postsecondary schools is the best way to put more Mainers on the path toward college, completion and career success. For more information on education and workforce legislation, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing msanborn@mainechamber.org. □

LD 1164 simplifies the method for calculating the tax credit and the eligible degree qualifications

———— ***Maine Educational Opportunity Tax Credit is an important tool to attract people to live and work in Maine***

The Maine Educational Opportunity Tax Credit (EOTC) reimburses student loan payments for college graduates who live and work in Maine. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce believes this program is a powerful statement from state legislators to taxpayers who work and live in Maine and are making payments on their student debt. The EOTC is a great tool to attract people to Maine with a credential of value and or a degree. As a member of MaineSpark, we support Maine's goal that by the year 2025, 60% of adults in Maine's workforce will hold a post-secondary degree or credential of value in demand by Maine employers.

Currently the program is hard to navigate and administer. The Maine State Chamber testified on a bill this week that would make changes and simplify the program **LD 1164**, *An Act to Improve the Educational Opportunity Tax Credit*. Sponsored by Sen. Matthew Pouliot (R-Kennebec), the bill simplifies the method for calculating the tax credit. LD 1164 simplifies the degree qualification by treating everyone equally so the reimbursement applies to students in all educational fields, not just graduates from the Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM), as the current program does.

The Maine State Chamber has long supported the Maine Educational Opportunity Tax Credit because we feel it is an important tool to attract students/people to live and work in Maine. As we all know, Maine has workforce issues and Maine employers have difficulty attracting and keeping talent. Anything we can do to encourage students to attend school in Maine, and live and stay in Maine to work after graduation, is absolutely critical and important for our future economy here in this state. It helps to ensure a future workforce and economic success for Maine and Maine employers. For more information on education and workforce legislation, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing msanborn@mainechamber.org. □

LD 1685 could make a real difference in the quality of work and life for job-seeking immigrants with academic credentials

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce testified on a bill that would establish and provide funding for the Foreign Credentialing and Skills Recognition Revolving Loan Program to be administered by the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME). Under the program, the authority may provide interest-free loans to foreign-educated or foreign-trained, experienced immigrants who need assistance while awaiting federal employment authorization to pay the costs of certain actions and activities that will improve their work-readiness once they receive their work permits. **LD 1685, *An Act To Facilitate Entry of Immigrants into the Workforce***, sponsored by Rep. Kristen Cloutier (D-Lewiston), continues the conversation to create an easier pathway for skilled credential immigrants to enter Maine's workforce.

Maine's workforce shortage continues to be a topic of conversation among businesses, legislators and all Maine people. Across all sectors and regions, by 2025 Maine will need approximately 158,000 more workers than exist here today. For a state facing an enormous workforce shortage we need policies to designed to improve the recognition and transferability of foreign credentials. For many business owners, immigrant workers have been a vital reason why their businesses have been able to thrive in recent years despite the rapidly-aging,

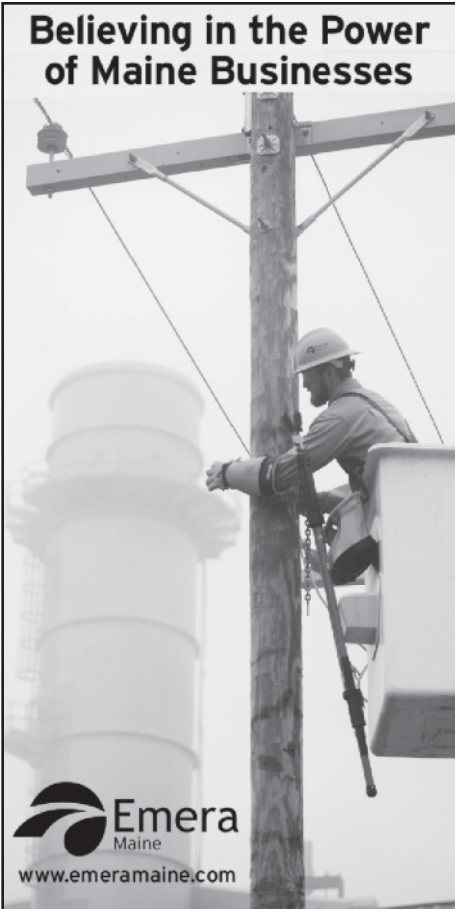
native-born population.

Maine must make it easier for immigrants with advanced educations and skill sets to enter its workforce. It would be a shame if Maine continued to ignore these employment barriers and for the expertise that brought these skilled workers to Maine to go to waste. Many highly skilled, college-educated immigrants often encounter a series of obstacles when they try to find jobs in the career for which they hold credentials. This often leads to these people settling for lower-skilled and lower-paying positions because they are unable to make full use of their academic and professional credentials.

As education-attainment levels rise in the modern economy, there is an increasing employer emphasis on the need for well-trained and well-educated employees. For job-seeking immigrants with academic credentials, LD 1685 could make a real difference on the quality of job and life they are able to have. Policies designed to improve the recognition and transferability of foreign credentials are imperative to better integrating skilled immigrants into our workforce and to assist in closing the gaps in Maine's workforce shortage.

For more information on education and workforce legislation, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing msanborn@mainechamber.org. □

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LD 647 addresses some of the basic barriers to integrate immigrants into the workforce

The Maine State Chamber has been working with Rep. Kristen Cloutier (D-Lewiston) on **LD 647, *An Act To Attract, Educate and Retain New State Residents To Strengthen the Workforce***, which creates various programs to provide education, services and training for the State's workforce immigrant populations. The bill begins to address some of the basic barriers to integrate immigrants into the workforce and become a welcoming state so that we will be able to attract people of all nationalities.

First and foremost, this bill proposes more resources to help immigrants learn English, with an emphasis on English language classes tailored to specific workplaces and industries. The more English proficient people are, the higher their earnings and ability to contribute to the local economy.

The bill helps immigrants understand the economic landscape, the needs of employers, and the process for applying and interviewing for jobs. LD 647 also places responsibility in the Office of Adult Education at the Department of Education to administer competitive grant programs to spread money beyond just the urban areas to communicate with emerging immigrant populations.

It establishes the Welcome Center Initiative to operate welcome centers in adult education programs to provide education, services and training for foreign-trained workers in municipalities or regions of the state that have immigrant populations or that have industries that are experiencing a shortage of trained workers, patterned after the New Mainers Resource Center operated by the City of Portland adult education program through a pilot program created by the 126th Legislature. These centers would work particularly with higher-skilled immigrants to provide services and training to prepare them to enter Maine's job market within a period of 6-18 months.

Additionally, the bill tasks the Department of Education to provide grants for English language instruction for adult education programs.

Maine is faced with a workforce shortage across all sectors and regions. By 2025, Maine will need approximately

158,000 more workers than exist here today. We are the oldest state in the nation and getting older. More people are dying than are being born. Our median age has gone up. Our workforce is smaller than it was 10 years ago; baby boomers are exiting the workforce, and there are fewer younger workers to take their place. Unless this trend is reversed, the Maine economy will begin to suffer. Capital investment simply will not flow to a place with a shrinking and aging workforce.

There is some great work being done in attracting people to move to our state, but we must do more. Just as we are the oldest state in the nation, we are also the least diverse. Maine has experienced a recent population growth, which has been due entirely to immigrants. Maine is home to roughly 49,000 immigrants. These people have higher educational levels, on average, than Mainers. If they are asylum seekers, they tend to have advanced degrees and are professionals. They have become entrepreneurs and opened new businesses. We constantly hear about the workforce shortage across the state of Maine and across of fields, health care, construction, hospitality.

Communities are all experiencing more immigrants in the community and the corresponding need for ESL classes. There are many Maine people who are not employed to their full potential, but immigrants face a more unique barrier. Maine needs specific strategies and supports to integrate them into the workforce. Some immigrants have limited English skills, a lack of familiarity with the job application and interview process, lack of U.S. work experience, difficulties with credential recognition and recertification challenges, lack of transportation and the list goes on. Maine needs a coordinated initiative to invest in this new workforce.

The Maine State Chamber believes that LD 647 is a first step to proactively support immigrants and increase the support systems to help address our workforce shortages. For more information on education and workforce legislation, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing msanborn@mainechamber.org. □

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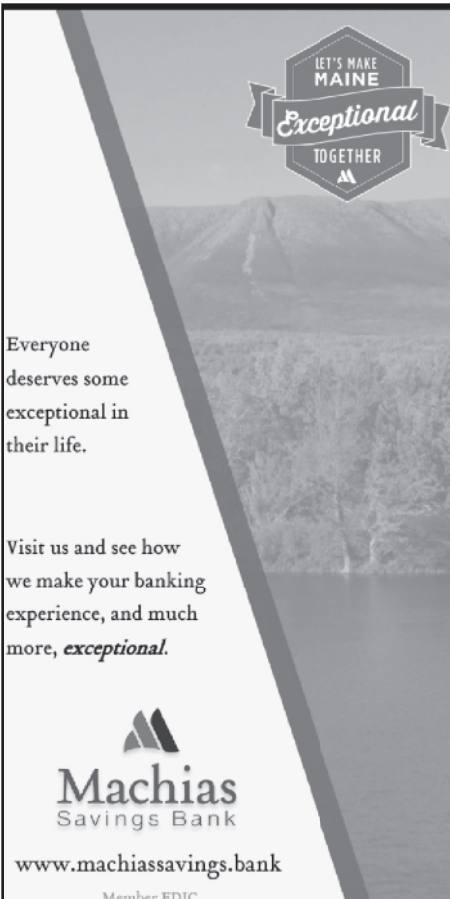
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Changes to help families grow and thrive are receiving bipartisan support from the Legislature _____

In 2017, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce joined a diverse group of stakeholders to align efforts toward a common goal of increasing economic opportunity and ending child poverty in Maine. The Invest in Tomorrow stakeholder group has been working to develop policy recommendations to create more economic opportunity for children and families and to ensure all Maine families with children can meet their basic needs and have opportunities for good jobs and a brighter future. By addressing key areas, we can lift Maine children out of poverty and start to strengthen Maine's workforce.

A bipartisan effort supporting some of the Invest in Tomorrow goals through two important bills is getting underway. The bill package, which advances the Invest in Tomorrow goals, includes one bill from Speaker of the House, Rep. Sara Gideon (D-Freeport), and one from Assistant House Republican Leader, Rep. Harold "Trey" Stewart III (D-Presque Isle).

Speaker Gideon's Leveraging Investments so Families can Thrive (LIFT) legislation builds on two previous, successful LIFT bills. It would help more parents pursue education as a pathway out of poverty in the Parents as Scholars program. LIFT would also ensure more families with children can meet their basic needs and have access to MaineCare when moving off TANF into employment. On top of that, LIFT will increase accountability and Maine's effectiveness at reducing child poverty by establishing benchmarks and outcome measures at DHHS.

Rep. Stewart's bill is the perfect complement to LIFT as it would make investments in a "whole-family" approach that helps both children and their parents move out of poverty. It would reduce the "benefits cliff" for families who are transitioning from TANF to employment, setting them up for success. It would also ensure that parents who are getting a GED can count their studies toward requirements in TANF to support them on their path out of poverty.

Together, these pieces of legislation represent thoughtful and meaningful bipartisanship. The Maine State Chamber is pleased to be working closely with both bills' sponsors because we believe both bills are something everyone can get behind – and because we all want to see children grow up to succeed in Maine's economy.

For more information on education and workforce legislation, please contact Megan Sanborn by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 108, or by emailing msanborn@mainechamber.org. □

Digest of New Legislation

Maine Chamber staff have studied each of these recently printed bills to assess potential impact on business trends. If you have concerns regarding any bill, please communicate those concerns to a member of our governmental services staff at (207) 623-4568.

A total of 335 business-related bills have been tracked to date since the session began on January 2, 2019!

JUDICIARY

LD 1701, An Act To Clarify Various Provisions of the Maine Human Rights Act. (Rep. Bailey, D-Saco, for the Maine Human Rights Commission) *Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary.* This bill describes the behaviors that may constitute harassment in reference to unlawful discrimination; clarifies the Act's coverage of claims based on association and based on the perception that an individual belongs to a protected class; and provides a definition of "gender identity." The bill provides needed clarification related to several Maine Human Rights Act provisions highlighted by recent court decisions, including confirming that a leave of absence can be a reasonable accommodation for a disability in employment, and that individual employees may be liable for their discriminatory behavior in certain circumstance

LD 1702, An Act To Enhance the Administration of the Maine Human Rights Act. (Rep. Bailey, D-Saco, for the Maine Human Rights Commission) *Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary.* This bill amends the Maine Human Rights Act so as to make more efficient the processing and investigation of complaints. The bill:

- 1 Specifies that the Act must be construed to provide broad protection from discrimination; that it may not be construed to provide less coverage than the federal law; and that the interpretation of the Act by the Maine Human Rights Commission is entitled to deference by the court;
- 2 Authorizes the executive director of the commission to appoint or hire additional necessary personnel subject to the Civil Service Law;

- 3 Replaces certain references to the enumerated potential bases for discrimination with references to "protected class characteristics, membership or status;"
- 4 Specifies that funds received by the commission for the purpose of implementing a third-party neutral mediation program are not subject to any statewide cost allocation plan;
- 5 Designates as confidential certain information that is collected during the investigation of a complaint under the Act and exempts such information from the definition of "public record" for purposes of the Freedom of Access Act;
- 6 Authorizes the executive director of the commission to administratively dismiss a complaint brought under the Act for specified reasons;
- 7 Provides that any post-finding conciliation agreement that includes the commission as a signatory is a public record;
- 8 Authorizes the executive director to issue a right-to-sue letter in any case in which the commission has not filed a civil action in the case or has not entered into a conciliation agreement in the case within 180 days of the complaint being filed, whether or not such a letter has been requested by the complainant; and,
- 9 Prohibits the awarding of attorney's fees and costs to the commission and specifies that the commission is not liable to pay attorney's fees and costs of another party.

LD 1703, An Act To Improve Consistency within the Maine Human Rights Act. (Rep. Bailey, D-Saco, for the Maine Human Rights Commission)

Public Hearings and Work Sessions

Public hearings are open to everyone. This public hearing schedule is subject to change. Questions may be directed to the Secretary of the Senate's Office at (207) 287-1540. For the most current schedule, please visit <http://legislature.maine.gov/committee/#Committees> or contact the committee clerk.

Monday, May 20, 2019

Education and Cultural Affairs
10:00 a.m.; Cross Building, Room 208
LD 1607 (work session), An Act To Create the Department of Early Care and Learning (Sen. Millett of Cumberland)

Judiciary
1:00 p.m.; Statehouse, Room 438
LD 1596 (work session), An Act To Enhance the Long-term Stability of Certain At-risk Youth (Rep. Bailey of Saco) □

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. The purpose of this bill is to address inconsistencies in the protections provided in different areas of jurisdiction under the Maine Human Rights Act. The bill provides more inclusive protection by:

- 1 Including adult family members dependent for care in the definition of "familial status;"
- 2 Including familial status as a protected class in employment;
- 3 Including age as a protected class in public accommodations;
- 4 Providing that public entities cannot discriminate on the basis of protected class; and,
- 5 Clarifying the scope of the Maine Human Rights Act application in education.

The bill also clarifies the protections provided to pregnant persons in employment and that the sexual orientation provisions already in the Maine Human Rights Act extend to gender identity. □

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Health Care Forum

Wednesday, May 22 | 9:00 a.m. to Noon
Bangor Savings Bank, Senator Way, Augusta



Health care and health insurance was the single biggest public policy issue that impacted - and motivated - voters this past November at the polls. Newly-elected officials from both sides of the aisle - in Maine and in Washington - have pledged to do something “meaningful” to address cost and access to health care. On May 22, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce is hosting its annual informative and timely presentation on the status of health care here and beyond, and what you as a business in Maine need to know as we head into 2019, and what specifically is being considered here in Maine this session. We will be joined by Katie Mahoney, vice president of health policy and a national speaker from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, as well as other state-based experts on health insurance and health care delivery.

To register for this event, please visit mainechamber.org or contact Angie Arno by calling (207) 623-4568, ext. 104, or by emailing aarno@mainechamber.org.

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