



**Testimony Of Thomas G. Rainey
Executive Director, Maine Center for Entrepreneurial Development**

**LD 1324,
An Act to Support Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Maine's Economic Future
Before The
Joint Standing Committee on
Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development**

April 19, 2017

Senator Volk, Representative Fecteau, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research & Economic Development:

My name is Thomas Rainey. I am the Executive Director of the Maine Center for Entrepreneurial Development (known as "MCEB"), and I live in Portland, Maine. I am here today to testify in favor of the proposed legislation by Representative Grohman to strengthen Maine Technology Institutes' role in supporting applied R&D, business incubation and acceleration, student internships, and technology transfer at the state's research performing institutions.

As you know, the Governor's biennial budget proposes to eliminate funding at the Department of Economic and Community Development that supports MCEB, the Target Technology Center and the Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center at the University of Maine. MCEB and these partner organizations share the mission of helping entrepreneurs reinvent the Maine economy through intensive training and mentoring. Over our 15-year history, MCEB has accelerated the growth of hundreds of Maine-based businesses. Thanks to a Federal grant and corporate sponsorships, in recent years we've been able to expand our outreach and leverage our resources to help other economic development organizations in strategic rural regions.

As per my past testimony to this committee on March 1, Maine needs these new startup companies to diversify the economy and plant the seeds for our future economic growth. The proposed bill will provide MTI with a more explicit mandate to support initiatives like MCEB and others that foster new businesses, retain graduates, and attract new talent and outside venture capital to the state. Combined, these activities lead to a more fertile ecosystem for other new businesses that create the jobs necessary to expand our economy.

Over the past ten years 140 startup businesses have graduated from MCEB's training programs. This year, assuming our funding remains intact, we expect to reach over 200 more entrepreneurs all around the state. Without support from partners like the DECD, Maine Technology Institute, Finance Authority of Maine, Maine Venture Fund and many private sponsors we would be unable to provide the programs that have already created 300 new jobs in Maine. For these reasons, I urge you to support LD 1324.