

Testimony of KV Connect Mid-Maine's Young Professional's Group in support of:

LD 221 An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2021, June 30, 2022, and June 30, 2023

February 24, 2021

Dear Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement & Business:

I am writing today on behalf of KV Connect, a partner in the Realize Maine Network of the Maine Development Foundation, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of LD 221 and the proposed funding for the Realize Maine Network. The mission of our organization, similar to others in the Realize Maine Network, is to positively impact our community through economic, social, and community service initiatives. Our initiatives seek to help retain young talent in central Maine by connecting young professionals to the many community resources and networking opportunities.

The grant funds that KV Connect receives from Realize Maine hosts a variety of events to showcase area businesses, networking opportunities for young professionals, professional development scholarships for young professionals, and fund-raising opportunities to support local non-profits. In 2020, KV Connect was also able to engage new members in subcommittees and our Steering Committee. In addition to networking and professional development, KV Connect serves the community each year through our community service opportunities. Last year, our organization raised and donated over \$2,000 to local nonprofits, and almost \$5,000 worth of food to the local soup and sandwich program, illustrating that the yearly economic impact of the grant funds that we received has grown exponentially.

The COVID Pandemic has brought a new set of challenges, but we have worked to develop some outdoor recreation activities utilizing our Kennebec Messalonskee Trail system, as well as our outdoor Yoga at the historical Waterville Riverwalk. We have been able to connect with one another (and other Realize Maine Groups) through Zoom, and even hosted successful Zoom Trivia and Professional Development events that have attracted dozens of new young professionals that have not participated in our events before.

Despite the challenges of staying connected during the COVID pandemic, KV Connect continued to grow and develop community partnerships in 2020: Waterville Parks and Recreation, Waterville Rotary Clubs, Central Maine Growth Council, Kennebec Messalonskee Trails, Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Waterville Area Humane Society, Educare Central Maine, Waterville Creates! and Healthy Northern Kennebec. Our goal for this year is to grow a new partnership with Main Street Skowhegan to meet a much-needed networking opportunity just up the river from Waterville.

Thank you for your consideration in continuing this important funding and the work of Maine Development Foundation, Realize Maine, and KV Connect to promote area businesses, outdoor recreation opportunities, and community resources that make our region a great place to live and work.

Thank you for all that you do to serve Maine's citizens,

Samantha Burdick
KV Connect, President