



## The University of Maine System Workforce Development Infrastructure Bond (LD 836\*)

### Why invest in Maine's Public Universities? Our economy depends on it.

Maine's economic success is built upon a strong public university system. The state's people and prosperity depend upon a skilled workforce – produced by Maine's public universities. But the current condition and capacity of our facilities is costing us students, which Maine simply cannot afford.

\$75 million in State investment in University of Maine System workforce development infrastructure will:

**Produce More of the Skilled Workers Maine Needs:** From rural nursing homes and hospitals to Main Street banks and small businesses to global high-tech manufacturers, Maine employers say University of Maine System graduates are their top talent – they just need more of them.

For less than the State now spends to construct a new high school, this investment will build capacity and enrollment in programs that directly support Maine's workforce needs at all University campuses, leading to more graduates prepared for Maine jobs in the increasing number of high-demand fields that require a four-year or advanced degree.

Proposed projects, largely through cost-effective renovations to existing facilities, will:

- Add capacity for STEM education, including computer science and cybersecurity;
- Expand nursing simulators and allied health training labs;
- Improve non-academic spaces that support student success, recruitment and retention, career development and job placement;
- Bring jobs and new investments to our local communities.

### **Grow Maine's Economy and Reverse Demographic Declines by Attracting Students/Future Workers:**

Campus appearance and quality are key factors in choosing a college and staying through degree completion. As the University of Maine System works to keep Maine kids here and attract more out-of-state students who pay more and often stay in the state to live and work after graduation, our campuses must be competitive with peers in the region. Modernization of facilities will improve recruitment and retention and is necessary now to ensure our continued growth in out-of-state enrollment (up 36 percent in the past five years to now nearly 6,000 students) essential to the economic health of Maine and its public universities.

**Enhance the System's Fiscal Position:** Nearly half of the System's 550 buildings have not been meaningfully renovated in at least 50 years (less than 20 percent of our competitors' facilities have gone that long without upgrades). This makes our space more costly to maintain and renovate, and presents safety and accessibility concerns. Public investment, which will spur private and other giving, will build upon the System's improved financial stability (brought about by One University reforms and right-sizing that have resulted in \$82 million in annual savings) by further reducing repair and operating costs, decreasing our facilities' footprint and increasing tuition revenue.

This much-needed investment in University of Maine System workforce development infrastructure must be a top priority now for Maine's legislators. Just like roads and bridges, our campuses are critical public infrastructure essential to our state's prosperity. University facilities and the Maine students, employers and communities who depend upon them cannot wait for a future Legislature to act.

\*LD 836, *An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Build Maine's Workforce Development Capacity by Modernizing and Improving the Facilities and Infrastructure of Maine's Public Universities* would authorize a \$75 million University of Maine System workforce development infrastructure general obligation bond question go to voters, likely in November of 2018. The last System bond was authorized in 2013.