

Testimony of
Ben Lucas on behalf of
The Maine State Chamber of Commerce

In SUPPORT of LD 1923: “An Act To Establish the Maine Spaceport Corporation”

February 1st, 2022

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and members of the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business, my name is Ben Lucas, I live in Portland, and I am here today representing the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is a statewide business organization made up of both large and small businesses with over 5,000 members companies. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce is pleased to be testifying in support of LD 1923.

I want to start by thanking Senator Daughtry for bringing this legislation forward. The Chamber has supported this concept for several years now, dating back to the 129th Legislature when it was first introduced, but due to the pandemic it was one of the issues that didn't get a chance to move forward. At a high level, the Chamber is supportive of establishing the Maine Spaceport Corporation because it will generate new investment into Maine, which is good for economic development and job creation. It will grow a new and innovative industry in Maine, which will help attract young people to Maine, and keep our youth in state.

Maine is well positioned to be a leader in aerospace technology in the global market. There are four key advantages I want to highlight that put us in this position. First, our eastern and northern geographic location. Second, our well-established manufacturing sector. Third, the potential workforce. Our higher education systems at the University of Maine, Maine Community College System, and the newly established Roux Institute are well positioned to develop a workforce around STEM education. Lastly, we also have the existing infrastructure in place at Loring and Brunswick. The former military infrastructure at Loring and Brunswick are ideal facilities to create launch pads and host the spaceport complex.

LD 1923 helps support Governor Mills 10-Year Strategic Plan with the goal of adding 75,000 new people to the workforce. The establishment of the Maine Space Data and Advanced Analytics Center of Excellence and the Maine New Space Innovation Hub will attract people to come work in Maine. The K-12 education in Maine will also play a critical role to promote STEM education to help meet the demands this new industry will have for jobs.

To conclude, this committee will be hearing from many experts on this matter today who can speak to the technical aspects much more than myself. But this creates an enormous opportunity for investment into Maine's economy and create thousands of new jobs. The Chamber is happy to be engaged in this process and lends our support wherever is needed. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce strongly supports LD 1923 and would encourage the committee to vote, "Ought To Pass".

Thank you for allowing me to testify today, I am happy to answer any questions either now or at the work session.

Ben Lucas
Government Relations Specialist
Maine State Chamber of Commerce
Phone: 207-441-9333
Email: blucas@mainechamber.org