

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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January 9, 2018

Hon. Amy F. Volk, Senate Chair
Hon. Ryan M. Fecteau, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development
Cross State Office Building, Room 208
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Sen. Volk, Rep. Fecteau, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research, and Economic Development:

This letter is in response to the written request dated December 14, 2017 from the Task Force on Maine's 21st Century Economy and Workforce for FAME to submit ideas to this committee regarding possible alternative sources of funding for the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program, which is set forth at 10 M.R.S.A. § 1019.

FAME was pleased to present information before the Task Force in September regarding our role in addressing workforce needs and opportunities. Our vision is to lead the creation of good paying jobs for Maine residents by working at the nexus of economic and workforce development. FAME has been an active participant in the statewide Workforce and Education Coalition, which recently launched a program to close the workforce gap under the brand name "MaineSpark." MaineSpark is a ten-year commitment from Maine's education and business leaders to work together to ensure that Maine's workforce is productive and competitive. Our goal is that by 2025, 60% of Mainers will hold education and workforce credentials that position Maine and its families for success.

We believe that it is essential that there be an evaluation of the workforce needs of the state and an aligning of the use of limited public resources to ensure that loan forgiveness and loan repayment programs are targeted to areas where they will do the most good to meet the needs of Maine's workers and employers. FAME and these programs can play a positive role in this regard.

FAME is honored to have earned the Legislature's and other organizations' trust and confidence in administering various state programs related to business and education financing. In addition to the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program, there are other legislatively-created programs that have not been funded and, thus, have never been administered. These programs include, among others, the Maine STEM Loan Program, 20-A M.R.S.A. §§ 12921 – 12927, and the Social Work Education Loan Repayment Program, 10 M.R.S.A. § 1038. A bond

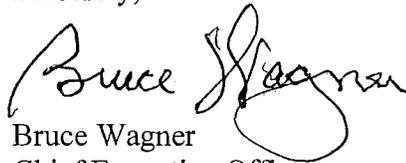
bill which we support, L.D. 1614, was carried over from the First Session to this session and would finally fund the Maine STEM Loan Program.

The Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program was designed to increase the number of nursing faculty in nursing education programs in the state. It has been on the books since 2005, but never funded. It can receive funding from any source, public or private, including gifts, grants, bequests, and donations.

As for ideas for possible funding sources, one thing is clear: FAME has no internal resources to launch or sustain the program. If General Fund appropriations are “off the table” as a possibility for funding the program, perhaps state general obligation bonding or casino or marijuana licensing revenues could be considered? Or maybe Fund for a Healthy Maine allocations? Another option is for key program stakeholders such as hospitals and higher education institutions to consider privately funding a pilot program. These are difficult decisions to be sure, but we appreciate your interest in getting this dormant program up and running.

Please let me know if you have questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Wagner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bruce" and the last name "Wagner" clearly legible.

Bruce Wagner
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Task Force on Maine's 21st Century Economy and Workforce