13 April 2018

The 128th Legislature of the State of Maine
State House
Augusta, Maine

Dear Honorable Members of the 128th Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing L.D. 669, “An Act To Address the Unmet Workforce Needs of Employers and To Improve the Economic Future of Workers.”

The Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) was established by the Maine legislature in 2007, and launched early Spring 2008. CSSP is financed by employer contributions as part of their unemployment tax. The CSSP fund serves a very diversified population of job seekers that includes secondary and post-secondary students, immigrants, people on public assistance, people with disabilities, the underemployed, and veterans. Additionally, it identifies the workforce need of Maine employers through use of the high wage in demand list, and connects businesses with workers through the CSSP and on-the-job-training when coupled with the Maine Apprenticeship Program.

The Department of Labor currently partners with trade associations, education and training providers like the Maine Community College System, adult education, employers and others to directly connect work and learn opportunities, develop customized employer driven training, and focus on industries with significant demand. It is imperative the CSSP program continue to be accessible to the populations it was created to serve. The fact that CSSP allows, in fact demands, that resources outside of CSSP be leveraged, speaks to the number of people who can be served by this program. The CSSP has the simple aim of providing the most training, in the shortest amount of time, for the least cost.

L.D. 669 requires the Maine Community College System to become involved in administering the program, which overcomplicates an already efficient process. Not every CSSP trainee’s degree or certificate is even granted by the MCCS, so it seems inappropriate to assign one educator administrative oversight. Mandating involvement of the MCCS only increases administrative costs and bureaucracy, something I cannot support. Furthermore, L.D. 669 is unclear about the role MCCS would play in administering the program, placing trainees in a potential situation where the Department creates a training plan and the MCCS overrides it. Trainees have enough to juggle without these unnecessary administrative headaches.
The Department of Labor has already increased the efficiency of our CSSP program with outstanding results of improved outcomes, higher wages and more people with credentials. Additional reforms the Department has implemented without the need for legislation include moving Career Centers into community college locations and working more closely with MCCS staff to streamline communication, cross-promote available resources and programs, and develop industry-driven training to achieve the goal of MCCS students obtaining the critical skills our employers desperately need. Similar work has been done with Adult Education, the University System and private training providers. LD 669 would actually disrupt this progress and place the CSSP program on hold while new regulations were negotiated with the MCCS to define the new roles. Maine’s current workforce situation cannot afford such needless delay.

For these reasons, I return LD 669 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Paul R. LePage
Governor