

A scenic landscape of a mountain range in the background, with a dense forest of trees in autumn colors (yellow, orange, red) in the middle ground, and a calm lake in the foreground.

# MAINE 2040

## BUILT TO LEAD AGAIN

A Blueprint for Opportunity, Affordability and Discipline

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## PART 1: THE CHOICE BEFORE US

### I. Introduction - A Maine Worth Building

In 2040, my two young sons will be stepping into adulthood. The question that drives this plan is simple: Will Maine be a place where they can build their future, or a place they feel they must leave? Maine 2040 is a generational strategy to ensure that every child growing up in the Pine Tree State has the opportunity to stay, work, and thrive.

I grew up in a trailer in Patten, in the shadow of Katahdin, the mountain Governor Percival Baxter preserved “forever wild” as a gift to the people of Maine. That mountain taught me two lessons that shaped my life: that leadership is about creating things that endure, and that you must imagine a better future before you can build it. From my father, who left for the woods at 2 a.m. to provide for our family, I learned work ethic and perseverance. From my mother, a school lunch lady who fed the children of our community, I learned service and responsibility. Those values carried me from picking rocks in a potato field to becoming the first in my family to attend college, earning an engineering degree at UMaine and later an MBA from Harvard.

As an engineer and entrepreneur, I learned how to build things that matter. I co-founded MedRhythms, a health technology company that used advanced neuroscience and AI to help people walk again after a stroke or Parkinson’s. We raised more than \$60 million, earned FDA clearance, completed clinical trials, and created good-paying jobs, not in Silicon Valley, but right here in Maine, because I believed Maine could compete in the industries of the future. I moved the company home to Maine for a reason: I knew what our people were capable of. And as governor, I will help countless others do the same.

But today, Maine stands at a historic inflection point. The Fourth Industrial Revolution, driven by artificial intelligence, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, digital innovation, is reshaping the world economy. At the same time, America is undergoing a once-in-a-generation reindustrialization as factories, supply chains, and critical industries return home. These forces will create winners and losers across states. Maine must decide whether to lead or lag.

Right now, too much of our state is stuck in a 20th-century posture while other regions sprint ahead. Maine is 50th in new business starts. We face a 42,000-unit housing shortage. Our electricity rates are among the highest in the country. Our education outcomes have fallen to the bottom third of states. And over the past seven years, state government has spent \$3 billion more than inflation without delivering better services or better results.

Families feel this every day, through housing costs, utility bills, childcare shortages, and limited opportunities for their children.

This plan is built on three pillars that will guide every decision we make: *Opportunity*, *Affordability*, *Discipline*. These aren't slogans. They are the framework for transforming Maine's next 20 years. Opportunity means building an economy where Mainers can thrive. Affordability means making it possible for families to live and prosper here. Discipline means restoring a government that is lean, focused, and accountable, one that works as hard as the people who fund it.

Maine 2040 is not a list of talking points. It is a comprehensive strategy, clear enough that I could pitch it to investors, rigorous enough for engineers, and bold enough to rebuild our economy. It is designed for the next generation, not the next news cycle.

Maine has stood at crossroads before. Each time, leaders chose to rise to the moment. Baxter did it when he preserved Katahdin. Chamberlain did it when he led the charge at Little Round Top. Now it is our turn. If we act with urgency and hope, Maine's best days will be ahead.

*Dirigo: I lead. And with this plan, Maine will lead again.*

## II. Our Core Priorities for Maine 2040

At the heart of every decision in this plan is a simple question: Will this make life better for the working-class Mainers and for the next generation growing up in our state? Families like mine, people who get up early, stay late, and never ask for anything more than a fair shot, are the center of this blueprint. The Maine I grew up in valued hard work and fairness, and those values guide every decision in this blueprint. Maine 2040 is designed for them. It is designed so the children of today's working families have opportunities tomorrow that are greater than the ones we inherited.

These priorities are the foundation on which every strategy in this plan sits: *Opportunity*, *Affordability*, and *Discipline*.

*Opportunity* means building an economy where Mainers can build a life and career without leaving Maine.

*Affordability* means ensuring that working families can live securely, raise their children, and stay in the communities they love.

*Discipline* means a government that lives within its means and works as hard as the people who fund it, one that measures, fixes, and improves rather than growing without results. It also means not bending to the political winds and flavor of the moment. Real change requires consistency, focus, and the courage to see plans through even when they are difficult.

### MAINE 2040: THREE PILLARS



#### OPPORTUNITY

Building an economy where Mainers can build a life and career without leaving Maine.



#### AFFORDABILITY

Ensuring working families can live securely, raise children, and stay in communities they love



#### DISCIPLINE

A government that lives within its means and works as hard as the people who fund it

These three priorities form the compass guiding Maine 2040 and the strategy that follows.

### III. The Case for Change: The Stakes for Working-Class Maine

Maine stands at a defining moment. After seven years in which state government has grown faster than our economy and spent \$3 billion more than inflation, working-class Mainers are feeling the consequences every day. Working families are being squeezed from all sides. Costs are rising, opportunity is shrinking, and too many young people are leaving the state they love because they cannot see a future here.

## Maine by the Numbers (2025)

- 50th in the nation in new business starts<sup>i</sup> and 45th in business friendliness
- 50th in infrastructure<sup>ii</sup>
- 42,000 housing units short today<sup>iii</sup>
- 5th-highest electricity prices in the United States and 3<sup>rd</sup>-fastest-growing in the country<sup>iv</sup>
- As of 2023, Maine had 135,925 regulations, one for every 10 people<sup>v</sup>
- Highest average monthly grocery cost in the U.S. according to Empower<sup>vi</sup>
- 41st in 8th grade math, recording the steepest decline in New England, with only about one-third of Maine 4th graders reading at grade level<sup>vii</sup>
- Oldest population in the nation<sup>viii</sup>
- Nearly half of Mainers disapprove of the state's direction<sup>ix</sup>

## MAINE BY THE NUMBERS (2025)



**Only 1/3 of Maine 4th graders reading at grade level**

These numbers are not abstract. They describe a state where the cost of living has outpaced the ability of working families to build a stable life, and where government has become larger, slower, and more expensive without delivering better results.

*Affordability Is Breaking Working-Class Maine*

A working-class Mainer should be able to afford a home, pay for heat, raise their children, and build a life rooted in the traditions and values that define this state. But today, housing costs have surged beyond reach, electricity bills are among the highest in the nation, and childcare and healthcare costs strain family budgets to the breaking point. These pressures force families to make choices they shouldn't have to make and push opportunity further out of reach.

### *Opportunity Is Slipping Away*

A state once full of upward mobility is now watching its young people leave. Businesses cannot find the workers they need. Schools are failing to prepare students for the jobs of the future. Maine's regulatory environment discourages entrepreneurship and stifles innovation. The result? Maine is falling behind at the exact moment America is accelerating into a new economic era.

I know this story because I lived it. I grew up watching my father work long, grueling hours in the woods to provide for our family, and like countless working-class Mainers, he never asked for anything except the chance to build a good life. Today, families like the one I grew up in feel the system working against them, not for them.

## **IV. The 50,000 Foundational Jobs Strategy**

How do you build opportunity? You need a state that is creating foundational jobs. Foundational jobs are export-oriented jobs that sell goods and services beyond Maine's borders and bring new income into the state. These include advanced manufacturing, forest products, maritime and defense supply chains, life sciences, software, and professional services. They matter because local service jobs depend on them. You cannot build a prosperous economy by circulating the same dollars.

**Adding 50,000 net new foundational jobs during my term** would support additional local jobs across the economy, raise wages, and permanently strengthen Maine's tax base.

Higher incomes and a stronger tax base are essential to affordability because they allow families to get ahead of rising costs and a more prosperous economy creates additional tools to solve the state's challenges.

At scale, this strategy would roughly double Maine's long-term growth rate from 1.5-2.0 percent to the 3-4 percent range, moving us from managing stagnation to building sustained prosperity. This is not a theoretical exercise. It is the difference between a state

that slowly falls behind and one that gives its people a real future. We have the assets to do this, but we have no time to waste.

### THE AIM IS JOBS



**50,000  
FOUNDATIONAL  
JOBS**

By the end of 8 years



**DOUBLE  
MAINE'S GDP  
GROWTH RATE**

In Line with Dynamic Economies

\*Foundational jobs: jobs that sell beyond borders, raising prosperity for all Mainers, bringing more \$\$ into the economy.

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**Note to Reader:**

*From time to time, we will publish deeper dives on specific topics through Substack that build on sections of this plan. These articles will provide additional detail, data, and analysis to complement the policy framework outlined here.*

*This is a living document designed for builders, not bureaucrats. It is meant to be clear, actionable, and accountable, and it will evolve over time. I believe in the wisdom of the people of Maine, and I welcome ideas that focus on opportunity, affordability, and discipline.*

*I also recognize that these challenges are hard, complex, and shaped by entrenched interests, with varying degrees of difficulty. It is my commitment*

*to break the status quo in the best interests of Maine. Leadership requires vision, and if you are going to make a plan, make it big.*

*Have ideas or want to help make this a reality? Get involved at [www.owenformaine.com](http://www.owenformaine.com) or email [info@owenformaine.com](mailto:info@owenformaine.com)*

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## PART 2: FIXING THE FUNDAMENTALS, THEN MAKING BIG BETS ON WHERE MAINE CAN WIN

### Why Strategy Matters

Maine's current economic plans are not enough. Fixing the fundamentals, including the blocking and tackling of taxes, energy costs, regulation, and permitting, is essential, but it alone will not deliver the growth Maine needs. These simply get us into the competitive arena with other states and the global marketplace.

Maine needs a comprehensive, integrated economic strategy that operates in parallel: one that aligns fundamental reforms with clear priorities for talent attraction and retention, private investment, innovation-led job creation, and high value business growth. Strategy is what ensures that our reforms add up to more than incremental improvement, and instead position Maine to compete, grow, and win in a changing economy.

This section addresses both.

## MAINE'S ECONOMIC STRATEGY EQUATION



### Fixing the Fundamentals

Growth starts with getting the basics right. Maine's economy cannot thrive under red tape, high energy costs, high taxes, and sluggish permitting. The next administration must modernize government, so it moves at the speed of business, digitizing processes, clearing permit backlogs, simplifying the tax code, and cutting the bureaucratic friction that delays housing, infrastructure, and private investment.

We cannot expect entrepreneurs to build their businesses here out of loyalty alone. Maine must be a place where the economics of building, hiring, investing, and earning make sense compared to our neighbors. The benefits of doing business here should be self-evident.

Energy affordability must be tackled head-on by reforming how we buy, transmit, and generate power, while embracing innovation in clean, cost-effective technologies. At the same time, we must reform taxes and regulation so businesses are rewarded for expanding and workers are rewarded for earning more, not penalized for success.

The goal is simple: make it easier to build, hire, invest, and grow in Maine than any other rural place in the world.

### Playing to Our Strengths

Fixing the fundamentals is necessary, but it is not sequential. Maine cannot afford to wait until every system is perfect before we begin building the future. While we are fixing the fundamentals, we must also place smart, disciplined bets on the industries and growth areas where Maine can win.

Maine's competitive future lies in industries where our natural assets, expertise, and institutions already give us an edge:

- Maine's maritime legacy now positions us to lead in a shifting global landscape. From fishing and Arctic trade to shipbuilding and aquaculture, our Atlantic connection has always been an economic and cultural asset, and in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, it becomes a strategic one. As America reshapes supply chains and rebuilds naval and ocean tech capacity, Maine's deepwater ports, world-class research institutions, maritime workforce, and educational institutions like Maine Maritime Academy give us a unique opening. We can help restore America's competitive edge while creating thousands of high-paying jobs.
- Maine's forests have powered our economy for generations, and today, we must recommit to this industry that employs 29,000 people across the state. With 17.7 million acres of forestland, UMaine's research leadership, and a workforce skilled in this sector, Maine must lead in mass timber, biomaterials, advanced composites, and modular housing. As the country demands low-carbon construction and resilient supply chains, advanced forest products let us honor our heritage while building a modern manufacturing economy that revitalizes rural communities.
- Maine is also poised for major growth in the life sciences, one of the highest wage sectors in the country. The sector has doubled employment over the last decade with salaries exceeding \$100,000. With anchors like Jackson Lab, IDEXX, University of Maine, and the Roux Institute, Maine has the research capacity, talent pipelines, and credibility to lead in genomics, diagnostics, medical devices, rural health innovation, and AI-driven medical discovery. Maine can become a national hub for research breakthroughs and high-skill careers that allow Mainers to thrive at home.

Beyond these three core strengths, Maine has an opportunity to leap into the future by investing in capabilities that cut across every sector that can prepare us to win in the Fourth Industrial Revolution: artificial intelligence, digital assets, the Arctic, and remote work. These are areas where legacy disadvantages matter less and it is the early innings for every geography. AI can raise productivity and lower costs for our small businesses; digital assets can unlock capital and modernize finance; the Arctic offers a once-in-a-century logistics opportunity; and remote work allows Maine to compete for talent without uprooting communities. In the southern part of the state, as many as one-quarter of workers may already be working remotely, an asset we can build on if we jump-start the local economy. Built intentionally and paired with the blocking and tackling reforms in Section IV, these horizontals allow Maine to compete to win in a changing economy.

This is not an either-or choice. Fixing the fundamentals creates the stability and fairness that every economy needs. Playing to our strengths focuses that stability where Maine can win. Together, they create the conditions for people to take risks, start companies, grow ideas, and dream big here in Maine. Jobs are not created by policy alone. They are created by people. **Our goal is to attract and support those builders, clear the path in front of them, and let the companies they create generate 50,000 foundational jobs over time.**

### MAINE'S INTEGRATED ECONOMIC STRATEGIES



#### MARITIME INNOVATION

- At least 5,000+ jobs in this area
- Autonomous systems & dual-use tech
- Arctic testbed for innovation



#### ADVANCED FOREST PRODUCTS

- Protect the Kennebec dams
- Champion the industry
- 17.7 million acres of forestland
- Explore new markets for fiber



#### LIFE SCIENCES

- 6,000 to 10,000 jobs in decade
- \$108,000 average annual salary
- Build around talent, Roux Institute, and research expertise

### CROSS-CUTTING OPPORTUNITIES

#### BLOCK AND TACKLE

Improve business basics (cut the income tax, lower energy costs, education, cut red tape, quality of life, etc)

#### AI & DIGITAL ASSETS

Prepare for web3 and AI world - Weaving it into every sector

#### ARCTIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Build infrastructure for deepwater ports and Arctic shipping routes

#### REMOTE WORKERS

Build the environment necessary that remote workers can see themselves working in all of the rural areas across the state

### V. BLOCKING AND TACKLING: Fixing the Systems

#### Holding Maine Back

#### The New Hampshire Comparison: What Happens When You Get the Basics Right

Maine is competing globally, not just regionally. But New Hampshire is the most relevant case study for Maine because it is not an abstract peer or a theoretical comparison. It is our closest neighbor, our most direct competitor, and a state that shares many of the same structural realities Maine faces. When outcomes diverge this clearly between two states with such similar starting conditions, the explanation is rarely geography or luck. It is policy.

Both Maine and New Hampshire are small, rural states with populations of roughly 1.4 million people. Both operate in the same regional economy, face the same New England climate, compete for the same workers and businesses, and share many of the same geographic advantages and constraints: access to ports and interstate highways, proximity to major markets like Boston, a mix of rural and small city communities, and limited population growth driven largely by in-migration rather than birth rates.

New Hampshire has no income tax and no sales tax. Its state and local tax burden is 9.6 percent, compared to Maine's 12.4 percent<sup>x</sup>. New Hampshire spends less per capita on government yet delivers better outcomes. It ranks 2nd in the nation for business climate; Maine ranks 45th<sup>xi</sup>. Since 2010, New Hampshire's population has grown by 4.5 percent, while Maine's has grown by just 2.6 percent<sup>xii</sup>. Median household income in New Hampshire is ~\$91,000. In Maine, it is ~\$68,000.<sup>xiii</sup> It's no wonder that Maine's poverty rate is 60 percent higher than New Hampshire's.

Before we can invest confidently in the future, we must fix the systems that are failing today to be competitive. That is blocking and tackling: reforming taxes, controlling spending, and removing regulatory barriers that slow growth.

**THE NEW HAMPSHIRE COMPARISON:  
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GET THE BASICS RIGHT**

ROW LABELS	NEW HAMPSHIRE	MAINE
TAX BURDEN	↓ 9.6%	↑ 12.4%
BUSINESS CLIMATE RANK	↑ 2 <sup>ND</sup>	↓ 45 <sup>TH</sup>
POPULATION GROWTH SINCE 2010	↑ 4.5%	↓ 2.6%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	↑ \$90,845	↓ \$68,251
POVERTY RATE	↓ LOWER	↑ 60% HIGHER !

**Similar states, different outcomes. Policy matters.**

Guiding Principles for Blocking and Tackling

- **Taxes:** Stop Punishing Work and Start Rewarding It
- **Spending:** Your Money Deserves Better
- **Regulation:** Get Out of the Way of People Trying to Build

The following are policy components that will guide my administration's approach to tax, spending, and regulatory reform:

## BLOCKING AND TACKLING: FIXING THE FUNDAMENTALS



Stop Punishing Work  
and Start Rewarding It



Your Money  
Deserves Better



Get Out of the Way of  
People Trying to Build



Hard working Mainers  
and Businesses Need  
Lower Cost Energy

### Policy Components for Taxes

Maine's tax burden drives people and businesses out of the state. High income taxes punish work. Hidden fees add up without accountability. Property taxes squeeze seniors and young families alike. Maine cannot compete for talent or capital with a tax structure built for the 1980s. The goal is simple: reward work, reduce the burden on working families, and create a tax system that attracts investment instead of repelling it.

#### ■ **Immediate 10 Percent Income Tax Cut for Lower- and Middle-Income Mainers**

Working families need relief now. I will propose immediately cutting income taxes by 10 percent for households earning under \$200,000. This puts money back in the pockets of the people who need it most and rewards work.

#### ■ **A Responsible, Measured Roadmap to Eliminating the Income Tax in Eight Years**

Other states have proven that eliminating the income tax can be done responsibly. My administration will follow their model. The roadmap includes growing the economy, cutting spending, broadening the revenue base, and phase out the income tax in stages. This takes discipline and focus and is not an overnight endeavor.

#### ■ **End the Hidden Taxation of Ordinary Families**

Fees and surcharges have exploded in recent years. Registration fees. Permit fees. Licensing fees. These add up to hundreds or thousands of dollars for families and small

businesses. My administration will review every fee, and unnecessary fees will be eliminated. Remaining fees will be capped and indexed to inflation. This includes no tax on tips, no tax on overtime, and parity with the federal government on immediately expensing R&D. Taxation should be transparent, not hidden in bureaucratic fine print.

### ■ **Expand the Homestead Exemption and Freeze Property Taxes for Seniors**

Property taxes are crushing Maine families and seniors on fixed incomes. Meanwhile, 20 percent of Maine homes are second homes,<sup>xiv</sup> four to five times the national average.

My administration will expand the homestead exemption for primary residences and freeze property taxes for seniors, ensuring that Mainers can afford to stay in the homes they have spent a lifetime building. We will negotiate an agreement with towns and cities that they will commit to property tax relief to receive the 5 percent revenue share, and we will cap the ability to increase property taxes in unorganized territories.

### **Policy Components for Spending**

State spending has grown faster than the economy, faster than inflation, and faster than population. Programs multiply without accountability. The result is a bloated government that delivers less value every year.

Mainers work hard for their money. They deserve a government that does the same.

### ■ **The Maine Performance Review - A Full, Independent Audit of All State Spending**

The recent fraud uncovered at Gateway Community Services by the Maine Wire highlights the importance of this work. As they say, where there is one rotting log, you must check the whole pile.

Every program, every agency, every line item will be reviewed through the Maine Performance Review, an independent, top-to-bottom audit of state operations. The review will identify waste, fraud, duplication, outdated programs, and initiatives that fail to deliver results. This is not about cutting services people depend on. This is about cutting the bloat that makes government expensive and ineffective.

### ■ **Roll State Spending Back to Pre-COVID Levels Adjusted for Inflation and Population**

The pandemic created emergency spending that became permanent. My administration will return to a sustainable baseline: pre-COVID spending levels adjusted for inflation and

population growth. This provides the resources we need without the excess we cannot afford.

### ■ **Reset the Spending Growth Cap: Aligning Government with Economic Reality**

The current spending growth cap is based on the 2004 budget and has been gamed by the current administration.

Going forward, after rolling back spending to pre-COVID levels, state spending will not exceed inflation plus population growth on a year-over-year basis without a supermajority vote. This forces discipline and ensures that government grows only when the economy and population support it. I will promote a constitutional amendment to enshrine this principle and will propose budgets that honor it until the amendment passes.

### ■ **Total Transparency: Where Every Dollar Goes in Real Time**

Taxpayers should be able to see exactly how state government spends money, in real time, with full transparency and accountability. My administration will create a public online blockchain that shows every state expenditure, contract, and grant as it happens, allows users to search, sort, and analyze spending, and publishes budget documents in plain language that anyone can understand.

## Policy Components for Regulation

Regulations affect the cost of everything, including housing, energy, childcare, healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation. Maine's regulatory structure is outdated, contradictory, and slow. Complexity has costs and simplifying it when it serves no purpose increases business friendliness.

### ■ **The Red Tape Reduction Commission - A Complete Regulatory Audit**

The Maine 2040 Plan establishes the Red Tape Reduction Commission to conduct a comprehensive audit of every significant rule and regulatory process. This commission will identify outdated regulations, rules that increase costs without improving safety, permitting processes that take too long, barriers to housing construction, and regulatory burdens that fall disproportionately on small and rural employers.

### ■ **A One In, Two Out Requirement for All New Regulations**

As of 2023, Maine had 135,925 regulations, one for every 10 people. For every new regulation created, at least two existing regulations must be eliminated. This ensures that the regulatory burden trends downward over time.

### ■ **Fast Track Permitting for Housing and Economic Projects**

Permitting delays increase housing prices and push employers away. Maine cannot be competitive if it takes years to get approvals that require only weeks in other states. Under my administration, agencies must adhere to strict 90-day timelines. A single, unified permit application will be created for major projects. A permitting ombudsman in the Governor's Office will enforce deadlines and intervene when processes stall.

### ■ **Economic, Small Business, and Rural Impact Tests**

Every major regulation will require an expedited small business impact analysis and a rural competitiveness review. This builds on the pending LD1673 that would create an economic impact policy proposal.

## VI. MAKING BIG BETS ON WHERE MAINE CAN WIN: Our Smart Bets for High-Wage Jobs

### *Why Smart Bets Matter*

Maine must build its future on the strengths that define us, the industries where we already have talent, history, and a real foundation to win. With underlying conditions so challenging, the only way to reverse decades of stagnation is to focus on sectors where we can win big today. These Smart Bets strengthen, not replace, Maine's other industries, because a rising tide lifts every sector. I know this path deeply: as the son of a logger who worked in the paper industry and as a technologist who built a \$60 million venture-backed company in Maine, I am rooted in the industries that built our past and fluent in the technologies that will shape our future. I believe, if done well, we can be the beacon of American dynamism by 2040.

### *Guiding Principles for Smart Bets*

- **Focus on what we can lead in, where we have talent, history, and a real foundation to win.** Maine must concentrate on sectors where our people, history, geography, and institutions give us a real chance to win, not spread ourselves thin across every idea.
- **Take big swings, make no little plans.** Competing in the Fourth Industrial Revolution requires ambition. Small states win by being bold, not timid.

- **Act with discipline and private sector coordination.** Smart Bets succeed when industry, research, workforce, and community partners pull in the same direction, not when government tries to run everything from Augusta.
- **Strengthen, not ignore, Maine's other industries.** These Smart Bets lift all sectors by raising wages, attracting talent, and creating supply chains that benefit fishing, farming, tourism, trades, and small businesses.
- **Tell the world who we are and what we do best.** Maine must build a clear identity, a brand, around the sectors where we can lead the country. When people know what a state stands for, investment, talent, and opportunity follow.

### *Policy Components for Smart Bets*

#### ■ Choose Maine Marketing Campaign

Maine must tell a bold, unified story about who we are and where we are going. My administration will launch a Choose Maine campaign that markets our strengths, opportunity, affordability, safety, outdoor recreation, and world-class quality of life to attract workers, employers, innovators, and former Mainers looking to come home. This campaign will focus on the smart bet areas and highlight each region's unique assets while reinforcing a single message: Maine is the best place in America to live, work, build, and raise a family.

#### ■ Maine Maritime Innovation Hub: Leading America's Naval and Ocean Tech Renaissance

My administration will transform Maine's maritime heritage into a 21<sup>st</sup>-century competitive advantage by building integrated shipbuilding, naval modernization, autonomous vessel testing, aquaculture, underwater data centers, and ocean tech development capacity. This initiative will strengthen Bath Iron Works as the East Coast's premier naval shipbuilder, fairly fund Maine Maritime Academy, expand repair and maintenance capacity across Maine's shipyards, develop cold-water testing facilities for autonomous surface and subsurface vessels, recruit ocean tech companies focused on sensing, autonomy, and defense applications, and establish Maine as the national leader in maritime innovation and naval readiness. For a deeper analysis, see Substack: "[All Hands on Deck: How Maine Can Build 5,000 High-Paying Maritime Jobs and Launch a New Shipyard!](#)"

## MAINE MARITIME INNOVATION HUB: WHY MAINE CAN WIN!



### 1) GEOGRAPHY

- Deep-water ports, 4th longest coastline, Arctic gateway



### 2) TALENT

- Generations of maritime craftsmen and engineers



### 3) INDUSTRY CLUSTER

- Bath Iron Works, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, premier commercial yards



### 4) SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

- UMaine, Maine Maritime Academy, research centers



### 5) EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Working waterfronts, dry docks, R&D facilities



### 6) BRAND IDENTITY

- Made in Maine means maritime excellence

### ■ Advanced Forest Products Strategy: Honoring Heritage, Building the Future

My administration will use Maine's 17.7 million acres of sustainably managed forestland and UMaine's research leadership to grow biomaterials, mass timber, composites, and modular housing. This strategy will stabilize and protect the base (29,000 jobs in Maine) and lead in Advanced Forest Products. This strategy will support new manufacturing facilities, accelerate commercialization of engineered wood technologies, and revive rural communities through high-skill jobs in a modern forest economy. The takeaway is that the state needs to support, celebrate, and market this industry. As outlined below, there are many exciting growth areas. For a deeper analysis, see Substack: "[From Decline Back to Dominance: How Maine Will Lead in Advanced Forest Products](#)."

## GROWTH AREAS FOR THE FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY



### ■ Life Sciences Center Expansion: Doubling Down

My administration will expand Maine's fast-growing life sciences ecosystem. The goal is to strengthen Maine's role in genomics, diagnostics, digital therapeutics, medtech, and rural health innovation, double the number of life science companies in the state, and make Maine a competitive regional hub for life science. For more detail, see on Substack: "[Life Sciences: A Smart \(Big\) Bet for Maine's Next Economy](#)"

### ■ AI and Digital Assets Leadership

My administration will position Maine as a national leader in AI adoption, digital asset innovation, and statewide modernization. This is embedded throughout the document, but the following are some components for this section:

- **AI Displaced Workers Fund:** A dedicated fund to retrain workers whose jobs are disrupted by automation or AI, ensuring every Mainer can transition into higher-wage, future-ready careers.
- **Blockchain and AI Pilot Zones:** Establish special economic pilot areas where blockchain property titles, tokenized assets, AI-enabled-permitting, modular construction tracking, and real estate tokenization can be tested safely and transparently.

- **Maine Crypto Innovation Council:** A public-private advisory group charged with guiding digital asset policy, identifying blockchain opportunities, and designing Maine's first blockchain innovation zone.
- **Tokenization and Real Asset Innovation Program:** Pilot items such as tokenized hotels, industrial sites, housing developments, and community projects to democratize ownership, attract national capital, and accelerate development.
- **Explore a Maine Stablecoin:** Evaluate a state-endorsed stablecoin or payment rail to reduce transaction costs, improve government disbursements, and brand Maine as the Wyoming of the East for digital assets.

### ■ Arctic Strategy and Trade Corridor

My administration will build a modern Arctic economy by aligning Eastport, Searsport, and Portland into a coordinated trade and innovation corridor that capitalizes on emerging Arctic shipping routes and global demand.

Components:

- **Arctic and Maritime Innovation Summit:** Position the state as the premier U.S. site for maritime autonomy testing through an annual innovation summit and national visibility campaign.
- **Arctic Trade and Logistics Corridor, Make Maine a Center of Shipping:** Build a coordinated Eastport, Searsport, and Portland strategy to support emerging Arctic shipping routes, cold chain logistics, and national security supply lines, leveraging Maine's natural deepwater advantages. This will be led by the Governor's Council on Arctic Competitiveness detailed in the infrastructure section.
- **International Flight Capability to Boost International Business:** Add full customs capability at the Portland Jetport to enable direct flights to Iceland, Norway, Greenland, and northern Canada, positioning Maine as the U.S. gateway for Arctic business, research, and commerce.
- **Arctic Innovation Zone:** Develop a cold-water testbed for autonomous vessels, ocean sensing, and Arctic logistics technologies, making Maine the premier U.S. site for Arctic research, maritime autonomy, and next-generation ocean tech.

- **Rural Vision Block Grants: Build from the Ground Up with Remote Work and Local Talent**

Maine's future must be built from the ground up, with every region empowered to shape its own path to prosperity. This \$24 million initiative will fund six regional consortia (e.g. Katahdin Region, Bold Coast, etc.), each receiving \$4 million over four years, to design and execute strengths-based strategies that attract, retain, and grow talent, with a particular focus on remote and distributed work. By leveraging local assets, whether natural resources, institutions, workforce capabilities, or quality of place, regions can compete for high skill jobs without forcing people to leave their communities.

- **Katahdin Horizon Partnership**

My administration will establish the Katahdin Horizon Partnership, a disciplined, long term investment vehicle to deploy patient capital into Maine's strategic growth sectors: maritime innovation, advanced forest products, life sciences, AI infrastructure, and digital assets. Every bet evaluates how much closer it gets us to 50,000 foundational jobs in the state.

## PART III: Constructing a Competitive Maine

### VII. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Supporting Every Maine Business

The Smart Bets outlined in Section V focus on strategic sectors where Maine can lead nationally: maritime innovation, advanced forest products, and life sciences. Those are the industries where focused, ambitious investment can create tens of thousands of high-wage jobs and position Maine at the forefront of the next generation of industries.

But economic renewal requires more than sector strategies. It requires a business environment where every employer can succeed, whether they're building ships in Bath, running a restaurant in Bangor, operating a farm in Aroostook, or opening a retail shop in Kennebunk.

Maine cannot build a competitive, modern economy on top of systems that are slow, outdated, unpredictable, and difficult to navigate. Every day I hear from small business

owners, manufacturers, tradespeople, and families who say the same thing: it is too hard to start something here, too expensive to grow here, and too uncertain to invest here.

Maine ranks 50th in business starts and 45th in business climate. These numbers reflect the daily experience of people who are trying to build a life or a business. I saw these barriers firsthand when I built MedRhythms in Maine. We have systems that often make success harder than it should be, with permits that take too long, regulations that contradict each other, and a government that defaults to cumbersome paper processes when digital solutions are long overdue. Energy costs and mandated benefits hit small employers hardest. Business owners are saying that “everything is going up, but not my bank account” and “I didn’t start a business to manage forms and filings.”

This section addresses the foundations that support broad-based economic growth across all industries and all regions.

### ***Guiding Principles for Economic Development***

- **As governor, I will serve as Maine’s Chief Business Officer.** I will not hesitate to pick up the phone, call the CEO of any company, and fight to bring new opportunities to Maine and keep existing companies here. That must be part of the job of governor.
- **Government should be a partner in growth, not an obstacle to it.** I will recruit people to my administration who share my belief that public service is a duty and a mission, not a job, and who are committed to serving citizens, not bureaucracy.
- **State government must be more responsive, more efficient, and more accountable.** Whether a business is seeking a permit or a family is navigating state services, the default experience should be speed, clarity, and respect.
- **Execution beats intention.** Predictable permitting, clear rules, aligned workforce systems, and a culture of customer service are the blocking and tackling that every successful state has mastered. Maine must do the same.

### ***Policy Components for Economic Development***

#### **■ Maine Means Business Initiative - Retention, Recruitment, and Incubation**

Maine Means Business is a three-part strategy to support businesses at every stage:

- **Retention: A Governor Who Shows Up.** I will personally lead an annual Job Retention Tour, meeting with the top 100 job creators in Maine to

identify problems before jobs leave, deploying rapid response teams when a mill in Rumford or manufacturer in Sanford struggles with state bureaucracy, workforce shortages, or high costs.

- **Recruitment: Build a Team of Hunters and Aggressively Bringing Jobs to Maine.** We will launch a proactive recruitment campaign led by the Governor, DECD, and private sector ambassadors to attract high-growth companies with concierge level support modeled after top performing states like Tennessee, hiring world class economic development hunters with proven experience landing major employers and building industry clusters, working alongside the Katahdin Horizon Partnership to focus on strategic growth sectors.
  - **Early wins will focus on workers already in Maine.** More than 100 people currently work in the state for companies like Google and PwC, respectively. We will map and organize this talent and make a direct pitch to these companies: they have talent here, they can recruit more, and get them to open satellite offices, creating early momentum as leading firms establish a physical presence in Maine.
  - **Talent Attraction: Boomerang Maine, Bring Builders Home.** Launch a talent and job-creator attraction strategy (public private partnership) focused on bringing experienced entrepreneurs and founders back home. Using world-class analytics, we will proactively identify high potential “boomerang” Mainers with ties to our high schools and colleges. Maine will partner to run a disciplined omni-channel outreach and inside-sales effort to recruit these builders to relocate with their businesses or launch their next ideas here.
- **Incubation: Increasing Support for Early-Stage Companies.**
  - *We will strengthen the Maine Economic Improvement Fund to support applied research in maritime innovation, advanced forest products, life sciences, and AI.*
  - *Restore the Seed Investor Tax Credit to 50 percent and \$20MM cap for companies that commit to creating high quality Maine jobs,*
  - *Create a venture capital fund tax credit based on the seed tax credit for funds greater than \$50 million, a commitment to invest in a portion of Maine companies, and requiring the general partners as a Maine residence. This brings more capital into the ecosystem.*

- Create a *Builders' Entrepreneur in Residence Program* to commercialize technology from Maine's institutions. The world class entrepreneurs will be provided with mentorship, workspace, legal guidance, access to capital, and charged to build companies.

### ■ Future-Proof Small Business Program - Teaching Every Small Business to Use AI

My administration will launch a statewide effort to teach every small business how to use AI, offering practical, hands-on training through the University of Maine System, Community Colleges, and local partners with accessible workshops and one on one support to help small businesses use AI to work smarter, grow faster, and compete effectively. Too many business owners lack the tools and confidence to use artificial intelligence, even as the ability to implement the technology creates winners and losers.

### ■ One-Day Digital Business Start-Up - Eliminating Paper and Bureaucracy

It is unacceptable that Maine still requires paper forms and wet ink signatures to start a business, slowing down job creation, frustrating entrepreneurs, and signaling that Maine is behind the times. My administration will create a one stop digital startup portal so starting a business in Maine takes one day, consolidating registration, licensing, tax setup, and regulatory requirements into a single modern platform that uses digital identity verification.

### ■ Permitting Reform and Predictability - A 90-Day Guarantee and Permitting Ombudsman

As outlined in Section IV above, my administration will establish strict 90-day permitting timelines, create a unified permit application for major projects, and appoint a permitting ombudsman in the Governor's Office to enforce deadlines and intervene when processes stall.

### ■ Mill Town Rebirth Zones - Ready Sites for Transformative Investment

My administration will designate former mill sites and industrial parks as Mill Town Rebirth Zones with ready energy and fiber infrastructure, pre-cleared environmental assessments, predictable regulatory pathways, and streamlined approval processes to support items such as modular housing plants, food manufacturers, aquaculture facilities, molded fiber manufacturing, AI data centers, and advanced manufacturing. We are focusing on mill towns first because these communities understand the value of jobs and economic development, meaning fewer NIMBYs and stronger local support for growth.

- We will strategically position sites to enter the AI data center race by targeting locations where Maine can secure lower cost, reliable baseload power, requiring companies to pay fair taxes, invest in local communities, and fund grid upgrades that strengthen reliability for Maine residents and businesses. For AI data centers, we will negotiate agreements to use their on-site backup power for bitcoin mining or other purposes during non-peak periods, creating additional revenue streams and grid stabilization benefits.
- **Leverage Opportunity Zones 2.0 to Drive Rural Investment - Turning Federal Incentives into Maine Growth**

Maine is one of the most rural states in the nation, and updated federal Opportunity Zone rules, especially the new Qualified Rural Opportunity Funds, give investors three times the incentive to invest in communities like ours, turning a previously passive program into a targeted engine for rural revitalization. My administration will use these areas as permitting pilot zones to experiment with streamlined, modernized regulatory approaches and stack state incentives on top of federal benefits to create a Maine No-Brainer Investment Package that attracts national capital for housing, childcare centers, life sciences labs, and advanced manufacturing in the communities that need investment most.

- **AI-Driven Statewide Permitting Tool - Exposing Bottlenecks and Creating Accountability**

My administration will launch an AI-driven statewide permitting tool where you can submit your plans and it will tell you where it meets and doesn't meet the codes. For certain items, there will be an option for automatic approval.

- **Strengthening Maine's Heritage Industries: Tourism, Agriculture, and Fishing**

- **[Tourism] Grow the Tourism Base: Shoulder-Season Tourism Incentives and Make Maine a Destination for Conferences**
- Maine will work with the industry to intentionally grow the shoulder season to stabilize jobs and increase four season tourism, building on clear evidence of rising off-season demand, including record passenger traffic at Portland International Jetport in both October and April. The state will smooth seasonal volatility by supporting October-May festivals (e.g. Millinocket Marathon-type events), outdoor recreation, arts, and food tourism.

- My administration will launch a focused effort to recruit national and regional conferences, especially in life sciences, forestry, maritime, healthcare, web3, and technology, and we will support an aggressive approach to a public private partnership for a right-sized conference center.
- In Section XI, Infrastructure we discuss other ways to increase tourism into the state of Maine.
- **[Agriculture] Agriculture is one of the most critical industries in Maine.** If Maine agriculture is going to thrive and compete, it must be allowed to operate as a modern, competitive industry. That means preserving industry-specific labor and employment laws that recognize Maine's short growing season and the realities farmers face. It means carefully reviewing PFAS regulations to ensure we protect public health without taking essential tools out of the toolbox or eliminating necessary inputs before viable alternatives exist. It means strengthening support from the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to help farmers prepare for and respond to drought and climate volatility. And on Day One, my administration will ensure Maine's seed certification program is run efficiently, professionally, and in full compliance with statute so farmers can plant, sell, and compete with confidence.
- **[Fishing] The Maine Lobster Fishery is foundational to Maine's economy, culture, and working waterfronts, and my administration will defend it without apology.** As governor, I will travel to Washington to make sure Maine's voice is heard wherever decisions affect our waters and our livelihoods. I will defend Maine's rights in the Gray Zones and insist on fair, enforceable international rules that do not leave our lobstermen exposed in a shared fishery. I oppose mandates for popup or ropeless traps that force expensive, unproven gear onto small operators. Instead, Maine will advocate for right-whale monitoring and risk-reduction approaches that do not require fishermen to add more gear, electronics, or complexity to their boats or traps. Where possible, I look to require fewer gear-marking regulations in the water, not more. I will appoint Maine's strongest, most experienced fishing leaders to represent us at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, so decisions reflect on-the-water

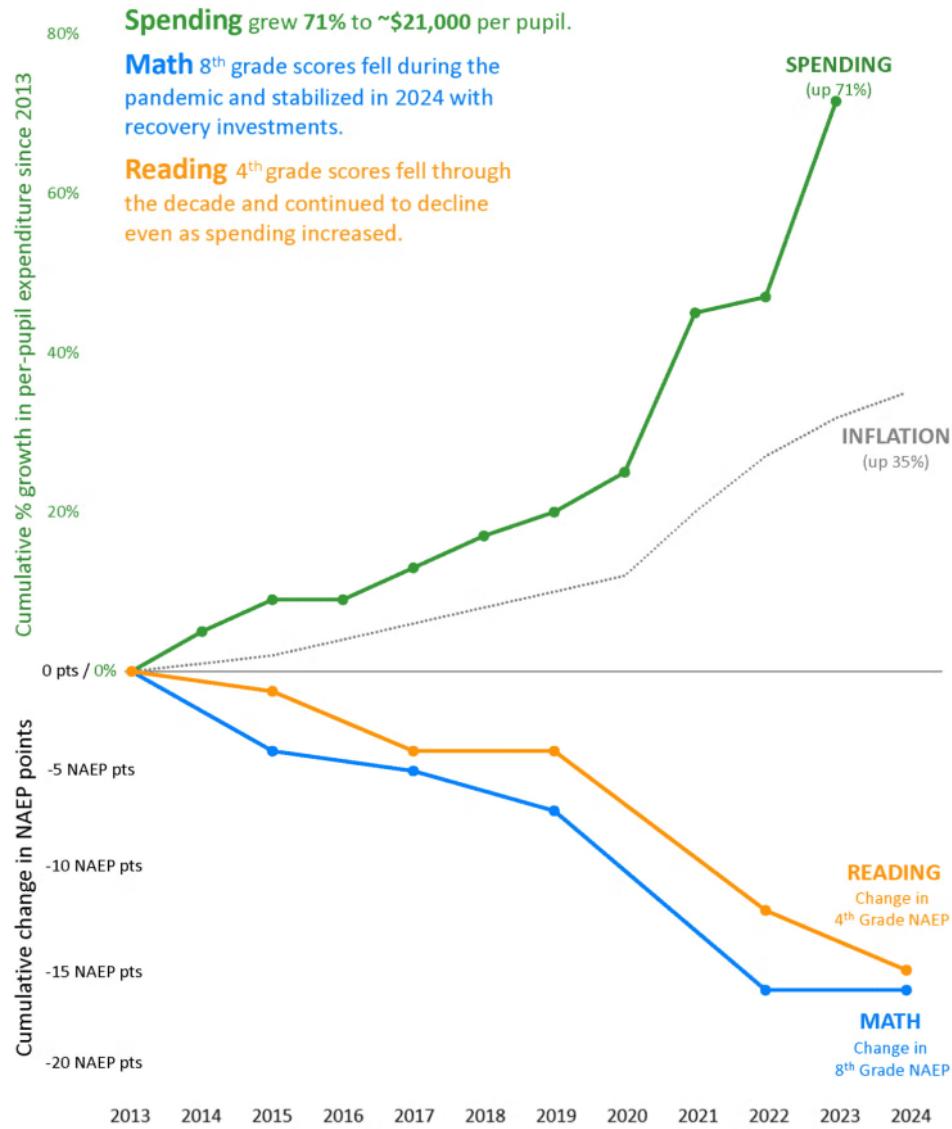
realities and not political ideology. And I will reestablish lobster hatchery programs focused on research and stock resilience, investing in the long-term resilience of the fishery.

### **VIII. EDUCATION: The Reading Governor - Ensuring Every Child Can Read and Succeed**

Education is the engine of opportunity. I owe everything to my education and to the great teachers, coaches, and mentors who believed in me when I didn't yet believe in myself. I was the first in my family to attend college, and that carried me from Patten to UMaine to Harvard and back to employ people in Maine. Every child in this state deserves that same shot, on their own path. Right now, they're not getting it.

Two out of three Maine fourth graders cannot read at grade level. Eighth grade math scores are near the bottom of New England and falling faster than anywhere else in the region. Employers can't find workers with basic skills. Property taxes and spending keep climbing to fund our schools while outcomes keep declining. The people in charge of schools at the state level have stated they don't care about outcome; they care more about social programs.

Maine: Change in Spending and Scores since 2013



Analysis by Edunomics Lab using data from these sources: Scores: The Nation's Report Card (NAEP) 2013-2024. Spending: U.S. Census Annual Survey of School System Finances through 2022, then NEA's Ranking of the States estimate for 2023. Inflation: CPI, BLS. Questions: Edunomics@Georgetown.edu

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But we know change is possible and illiteracy is a policy choice. Mississippi, once ranked 49th in fourth grade reading, implemented evidence-based literacy instruction and climbed to 9th in the nation in just a few years (and first when adjusting for socioeconomic status).<sup>xv</sup> They proved that when states commit to the fundamentals, students rise. Reading proficiency will be the spearhead of my education agenda. Every other reform depends on it.

Maine must get back to the basics and prepare for a future shaped by artificial intelligence. Strong literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, and character are essential no matter the path a student chooses, whether that is the trades, college, military service, direct entry into the workforce, or entrepreneurship. AI should be treated as a tool to learn and use, not something to dismiss as cheating.

In this new economy, **betting on the trades, entrepreneurship, and leadership and youth development**, aligned with Maine's Smart Bet sectors like maritime innovation, advanced forest products, and life sciences, while also meeting the workforce needs of the moment, such as teachers and nurses, is how Maine will build a workforce that can compete and succeed.

Maine 2040 treats education not as a silo but as part of a unified economic strategy.

### ***Guiding Principles for Rebuilding Maine's Schools***

- **Back to basics with a focus on literacy, numeracy, and core academic mastery.** Schools must emphasize evidence-based reading instruction, structured math programs, and clear expectations for student performance. Fads and ideological distractions cannot replace the fundamentals.
- **Prepare students for the world they are entering, not the world we grew up in.** Students must learn how to use advanced AI tools and think creatively while being protected from the harms these technologies can create. Maine will prepare students to thrive in an AI powered world while shielding them from addiction, exploitation, and developmental damage.
- **Embrace multiple pathways to the American Dream.** College is one path, but not the only one. Maine must expand access to technical education, apprenticeships, early college, military readiness programs, and entrepreneurial experiences. Maine must value the skilled trades, which will remain essential and highly resilient to automation and AI.
- **Support teachers and strengthen the profession.** We need strong pipelines into teaching, better training, restored classroom discipline, and professional development aligned with modern student needs.
- **Empower families and hold schools accountable.** Transparency and meaningful accountability help ensure that every child receives the education our taxpayers fund.

### ***Policy Components to Rebuild Maine's Education System***

- **Science of Reading and Foundational Skills Initiative - Ensuring Every Child Can Read by Third Grade**

You learn to read up until the third grade, and you read to learn for the rest of your life. Not fixing this problem leaves generations of children behind each year. Fifty percent of Maine schools surveyed by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) are teaching non-evidence based curriculum.<sup>xvi</sup>

We will pass a science of reading law that preserves local control by allowing teachers to pick their curriculum but only from evidence-based approaches. This law requires the use of research-backed reading instruction in every Maine school, provides funding for curriculum acquisitions, incentives for literacy coaches, and specialized intervention for managing dyslexia.

We will also establish a Third Grade Reading Guarantee: no child will move forward without reading proficiency. Reading is the gateway skill; without it, every other door closes.

- **AI for All - Preparing Students to Thrive in an AI-Driven Economy**

A decade ago, students who knew how to use a computer had an advantage, and today students who understand how to use AI will have the same edge. Too many Maine schools either ban AI out of fear or ignore it altogether, even as students enter a workforce where it is embedded in every job. Students must be taught to use AI as a tool, not fear it as a threat.

The AI for All initiative will ensure that we provide all students with an AI tutor that adapts to their learning pace, works with forward-thinking teachers to create and introduce AI literacy standards by eighth grade so students understand how these systems work and where human judgment and creativity still matter.

- **Entrepreneurship for All - Preparing Students to Thrive in an AI-Driven Economy**

Entrepreneurship for All needs to travel in parallel to AI for All. Entrepreneurship for All ensures students learn how to think independently, identify real problems, and create value, because in a world where AI makes execution easy, the most important skill is deciding what is worth building at all. Students who learn to generate ideas, build offerings, solve real problems, and create small ventures will be future small business owners. Together, these skills will create a next generation of citizens that can find opportunity without leaving rural Maine.

- **The Most Pro-Child AI Protection Policy in the Country - Banning Smartphones and Social Media in Schools to Protect Mental Health**

Childhood is not a product to be monetized, and we will lead the nation in protecting it. We need to stop this experiment on our children with devastating rates of anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicide among young people. Social media and the “algorithms” have been designed to addict, manipulate, and exploit, pushing algorithmic content that inflames, divides, and harms children as young as eight.

Maine will not wait for Washington to act. My administration will enact the strongest child protection standards in the nation by banning smartphones in classrooms, requiring phone free policies during instructional time, prohibiting social media access on all school networks and devices, and establishing clear, enforceable guidelines that prioritize focus, mental health, and real human connection over the hollow validation of likes and views.

- **Business-Education Alignment Commission**

My administration will establish a business-led commission made up of employers from maritime technology, life sciences, forest products, healthcare, digital innovation, and the skilled trades, charged with aligning education with real workforce needs. This commission will work directly with educators to define clearly what Maine needs in its future workforce and deliver concrete policy recommendations, with no area off limits. The commission will operate through two subgroups, one focused on PK-12 and one on higher education, reporting to a single chair responsible for accountability and results.

- **The Trades Commitment: Demand Is There, Capacity Is Not**

Maine does not have a lack of interest in Career and Technical Education (CTE); it has a lack of capacity. Today, more students want access to CTE programs than there are available seats, even as employers in construction, manufacturing, shipbuilding, and the skilled trades struggle to find workers. The skilled trades are among the most future-proof career paths for Mainers, offering good wages in work that cannot be outsourced or automated away. My administration will eliminate CTE waitlists by expanding capacity, modernizing facilities and equipment, and making paid pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships a central pathway, so every interested student can earn real credentials and step directly into high-demand jobs without taking on debt.

- **Expand Early College Access: Making Early College the Rule, Not the Exception**

Early college programs exist in Maine, but access is inconsistent and enrollment is capped largely because the University of Maine System lacks the funding needed to expand them statewide. My administration will make early college access the rule, not the exception by providing expanded funding to the University of Maine System to guarantee that every Maine high school student can earn college credit without debt. This expansion will align early college coursework with Maine's Smart Bet industries, allowing students to take college-level courses in life sciences, advanced manufacturing, engineering, and materials science, with UMS serving as a full partner in course delivery, teacher training, and clear pathways from high school to career.

### ■ **Teacher Workforce Strategy – Recruiting and Retaining Excellent Educators**

Maine is facing a teacher shortage driven by retirements, early-career attrition, unfilled rural positions, and rising burnout, even as teaching remains one of the most important professions in our society.

- **Recruitment:** My administration will treat this as the crisis it is by expanding a Teacher Apprenticeship model based on successful programs in states like Kentucky, built around programs where you can get paid to work in the schools, get credit for work, and take college classes on the side. We will identify partners to expand programs like The Leadership School at Kieve Wavus. We will make it easier to pursue alternative certification pathways for veterans, mid-career professionals, and skilled tradespeople.
- **Retention:** We will also restore order and respect in classrooms by backing teachers when they enforce discipline, ensure disruptive behavior has real consequences, and explore competitive pay structures that reward excellence, recognize specialized skills, and expand UMaine Farmington's early career mentoring program.

### ■ **School Choice and Innovation Expansion - Empowering Families with Educational Options**

My administration will expand educational choice across Maine by expanding public charter school options by raising the cap by one school annually. If that spot remains open at the end of the year it carries over to the successive year. Examples include the Maine Entrepreneurship School, 3DE schools by Junior Achievement

(<https://www.3deschools.org>), and an Alpha School comparable. Funding for these includes heavy reliance on private philanthropy.

We will support microschools and encourage hybrid learning pilots that combine in person instruction with online coursework to give small communities access to advanced classes they could never staff alone and implement interdistrict open enrollment so any family can choose a school in a neighboring district if space is available.

- **Partnering with the Ecosystem for Experiential Learning, Career Readiness, Credentials, and Financial Literacy with a focus on smart bet industries**

Maine must do more to connect classroom learning to real careers and leadership development. My administration will partner with proven youth development organizations like Jobs for Maine's Graduates, Aspirations Incubator Program, and Junior Achievement to expand access to extended learning opportunities (ELOs), industry-recognized credentials, mentorship, and hands-on experiential learning tied directly to Maine's Smart Bet industries.

- **Parental Bill of Rights - Empowering Families in Education**

My administration will enact a Parental Bill of Rights that guarantees parents the right to review classroom curriculum and instructional materials, receive notice and provide consent for any health, mental health, or social services delivered at school, access their child's academic and attendance records in real time, and be promptly informed of serious disciplinary or behavioral issues. Parents know their children best, and Maine schools must treat them as essential partners in education, not obstacles to be managed.

- **School Finance Modernization and Collaboration Incentives - Creating Transparent, Equitable Funding While Preserving Local Control**

Maine's school funding system is broken. It is opaque, inequitable, and disconnected from outcomes, with wide disparities in per-pupil spending, rural districts struggling to offer comparable opportunities, and taxpayers paying more each year without clear accountability. Fixing it will be difficult and, at times, fraught, but we cannot shy away from the hard things.

My administration will launch a 12-month, stakeholder-heavy review of school funding, bringing together educators, parents, superintendents, school boards, municipalities, and taxpayers through an independent commission charged with delivering a single, clear recommendation for reform. The goal will be a funding system that is transparent,

equitable, and more efficient, one that preserves local control while encouraging voluntary collaboration so districts can share specialized staff, transportation, technology, and advanced programming without losing their identity.

### ■ **Opt In to the Educational Choice for Children Act (ECCA)**

Maine will opt into the federal Educational Choice for Children Act (ECCA) to ensure that federal education tax credit dollars flow to Maine students instead of leaving the state. The ECCA provides a federal tax credit to individuals and businesses that donate to approved scholarship-granting organizations supporting K-12 education. If Maine does not opt in, those same dollars flow to scholarship programs in other states, sending federal tax-advantaged dollars elsewhere. By acting, Maine captures private, voluntary funding to expand educational choice and opportunity for students and families, without diverting existing public-school funding, while keeping federal dollars working for Maine students and communities.

### ■ **Real Food and Real Movement: A Healthy Foundation for Learning**

My mom and grandmother were lunch ladies, and one thing I know is this: a hungry child cannot learn; a child fueled by ultra-processed food cannot focus; and a child who is expected to sit still all day without movement or play cannot thrive.

My administration will protect universal school meals while improving their quality by prioritizing real, nutritious food, expanding locally sourced options that support Maine farmers, and reducing reliance on ultra-processed foods that undermine children's health. We will also guarantee daily recess and physical activity, especially in elementary school, recognizing that movement, outdoor play, and social interaction are essential for healthy development, better behavior, and stronger academic outcomes.

## **IX. HEALTHCARE: Accessible, Affordable Care for Every Mainer**

Maine's healthcare system is broken. Working families are being crushed by high premiums while more than 440,000 Mainers depend on MaineCare.<sup>xvii</sup> Neither MaineCare nor Medicare reimburses at the full cost of care, so hospitals and clinics lose money on every public insurance patient. That gap gets pushed onto private insurance. Premiums skyrocket. Employers cut coverage. At the same time, access to care is collapsing, and when people cannot get primary care, mental health care, urgent care, or a telehealth consult, they end up in the most expensive place in the system: the emergency room.

Meanwhile, in rural Maine, you cannot get care when you need it. Fourteen of our sixteen counties lack adequate access to primary care. Thirteen lack mental health providers.

You cannot recruit or keep talent in a state where calling 911 might mean waiting 60 minutes or getting no response at all. You cannot ask families to raise their children in communities with no mental health providers and no urgent care within an hour's drive. Access to healthcare is not just a health issue. It is a workforce issue, an economic issue, and a basic promise of public safety.

I know this system from the inside. I co-founded MedRhythms and spent years working with hospitals, clinicians, and insurers across the country. I saw how the right systems can expand access, improve outcomes, and lower costs by getting care to people earlier and closer to home. I also saw how broken incentives, outdated rules, and bureaucracy delay care and cost lives. As a board member of the American Telemedicine Association, I worked with national leaders on rural health innovation and virtual care policy. Maine should be leading this work. Instead, we are falling behind while people wait for help that never comes.

The numbers tell a grim story. More than half of Maine's EMS agencies are operating at a loss, and nearly a third may close within the next five years. Response times in rural areas now can exceed 60 minutes, far beyond the window needed to save lives in cardiac events, strokes, or serious trauma. Rural Mainers drive an average of 45 minutes to reach an emergency department, three times longer than urban residents.<sup>xviii</sup>

The path forward: rebuild access first, strengthen EMS as essential infrastructure, enable more care to happen locally with the support of specialists and technology, focusing on prevention for key conditions, bridge people to other healthcare programs, and realign incentives so the system rewards early intervention instead of emergency crisis. The policies that follow are designed to do exactly that: lower costs by expanding access, improve outcomes by treating people earlier, and restore confidence that healthcare in Maine works when and where people need it most.

### ***Guiding Principles for Healthcare Affordability***

- **Right care, right place, right time.** Maine must redirect care away from expensive ER use toward lower cost, more effective options including primary care, urgent care, and telemedicine. Improving access to these alternatives lowers costs system wide and prevents avoidable ER visits, while telehealth,

mobile clinics, remote monitoring, virtual behavioral health, and new care models expand access for rural communities.

- **Telemedicine, digital health, and AI first for rural Maine.** For large, geographically dispersed areas, virtual care and other technologies should be the front door to the system with seamless handoffs to in person care when needed. Maine will build the nation's model for a telehealth enabled healthcare system.
- **Strengthen EMS and hospitals by bringing more services to them, not less.** Rather than centralizing care away from regions, Maine will deploy mobile clinics, advanced telehealth tools, shared staffing models, and in-clinic tele-consults, expanded urgent care satellites to ensure care reaches rural communities instead of abandoning them.
- **Empower the workforce and expand reciprocity.** Let nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and optometrists practice at the full extent of their training and expand licensing and payment reciprocity to bring more providers into the state quickly.
- **Focus on the highest cost conditions, including preventative measures.** Maine will prioritize care models that reduce hospitalizations for chronic illnesses like diabetes, heart disease, COPD, and behavioral health crises, the conditions that drive the majority of our healthcare spending and strain families and the system. We will look at approaches beyond traditional healthcare, focusing on "wellcare".

### ***Policy Components for Healthcare***

#### **Strengthen the Backbone**

- **Reform, Stabilize, and Invest in EMS Statewide, including community paramedicine**

Ensure that when Mainers call 911, someone shows up every time by stabilizing EMS finances, modernizing equipment, supporting surge staffing, building regional EMS collaboratives, reforming MaineCare reimbursement, expanding community paramedicine, and equipping ambulances with real time connectivity to specialists.

- **Strengthen Local Healthcare and Critical Access Facilities Through Provider-to-Provider Virtual Care**

Build capacity at local facilities by enabling local PCPs, NPs, and DOs to consult directly with remote specialists through reimbursed provider-to-provider virtual consultations, with or without the patient present. This approach allows patients to receive the right level of specialty input close to home, reduces unnecessary travel and transfers, improves clinical decision-making, increases reimbursement flowing to local facilities, lowers overall system costs, and delivers better outcomes for patients and communities.

- **Rebuild the OB-GYN Units in Rural Hospitals Using Rural Health Transformation Funds**

Maine is facing a growing obstetrics crisis, with OB units closing and shortages of providers forcing expectant mothers in rural regions to travel hours for basic maternity care. We cannot attract or retain young families, healthcare workers, or employers in places like **Houlton** and **Millinocket** if people cannot safely have a baby close to home. My administration will prioritize federal rural health transformation funds to stabilize and re-open maternity and OB services in these communities, using modern staffing models, regional partnerships, and tele-OB support to restore access and confidence in rural healthcare.

- **Expand and Support Options for Aging in Place**

Stabilize nursing homes and assisted living facilities through higher reimbursement, expand community-based services, and support family caregivers so seniors can age with dignity close to home.

### **Improve Access and Cost**

- **Extend Access to Care in the Community, Redirecting Away from ER Overuse Through Telehealth, Payment Parity, and Licensing Reciprocity**

Eliminate outdated restrictions on telemedicine, preserve telehealth payment parity, and grant full licensing reciprocity with expedited credentialing for clinicians in good standing from other U.S. states where Maine faces documented shortages. Restore expanded scope of practice authorities permitted during the COVID-19 emergency. Together, these reforms allow qualified out-of-state providers to deliver care (and get paid for it) to Maine patients immediately, strengthen rural access regardless of geography, and reduce delays driven by duplicative licensing and accreditation barriers.

- **Create a Benefits Bridge to Eliminate the Cliff**

Phase families off public benefits gradually (and not as a cliff) as income rises so work and wage growth are rewarded rather than penalized, strengthening workforce participation and family stability. See: Fix the Benefits Cliff – Always Make Work Pay in the Workforce Development section of this plan.

- **Scale Mental Health Access Through Digital Platforms, AI, and Targeted Workforce Incentives**

Expand Maine's mental health capacity by combining digital innovation with strategic workforce recruitment. Partner with reputable teletherapy and mental wellness platforms to provide free or low-cost virtual counseling for high-need populations such as youth, veterans, seniors, and uninsured Mainers, building on proven models. At the same time, lead with ethics by partnering with research institutions to rigorously study, validate, and deploy FDA-approved AI-enabled mental health tools, including 24/7 text-based support, early-warning analytics for crisis detection. To ensure these tools translate into real access, expand loan forgiveness, scholarships, and hiring incentives for mental health professionals who commit to serving rural and underserved communities, strengthening the in-person workforce that digital care depends on.

- **Expanding Access and Capacity Through Responsible AI**

Too many Mainers, especially in rural communities, wait weeks for routine care or drive hours for services that should take minutes, even though staying healthy and able to work is critical to Maine's economy and quality of life. Artificial intelligence gives us a real opportunity to change that by handling routine tasks like renewing existing prescriptions, coordinating follow-up care, answering common questions, and helping patients stay on track, freeing doctors and nurses to spend more time with patients and less time on paperwork. Maine should lead by setting clear, modern rules that allow these tools to be used responsibly at scale, with patient choice, strong data protections, transparent and accountable decisions, and a clear path to human care when needed. With those safeguards in place, we should deploy AI where it can immediately expand access, measure results openly, and adjust quickly as we learn, shifting healthcare policy toward keeping people healthier, active, and contributing longer.

■ **Deploy Precision Prevention and Build Maine's Predictive Health System: Target the 10% Driving 70% of Costs with the Right Intervention, Right Patient, Right Time**

Unlike commercial insurers who often lose patients when they switch jobs or age into Medicare, state governments can take a longer view and invest in prevention that pays off over decades. Maine will partner with public health data providers, innovative providers and health tech companies to build a three-tiered system that matches intervention intensity to health risk, keeping people healthy before they get sick and coordinating care for those with complex conditions before a crisis sends them to the emergency room.

- **Tier 1: Population-Level Prevention.** Address preventable chronic disease at its source by addressing junk food in SNAP-eligible purchases, school meals, and public hospital food programs. Integrate nutrition education into schools and promote community wellness initiatives that reach all Mainers at low cost.
- **Tier 2: Targeted Intervention for At-Risk Individuals.** Use data analytics to identify Mainers who are pre-diabetic, overweight, hypertensive, or at elevated risk due to family history. Connect them to nutrition counseling covered by insurance, subsidized exercise programs, telehealth health coaching, and digital therapeutic tools that help manage weight, blood pressure, and glucose levels before conditions become chronic.
- **Tier 3: Intensive Coordination for High-Cost Patients.** Build world class multidisciplinary care programs for Mainers with diabetes, heart disease, COPD, or other chronic conditions that integrate medical, behavioral, nutritional, and social supports. Use predictive analytics to identify patients at highest risk of hospitalization and connect them to intensive coordination, remote monitoring, and community health workers before emergencies occur.
- **Payment Reform to Support Prevention.** Reimburse primary care providers for prevention work, not just sick visits, so they have time to counsel patients on nutrition, exercise, and lifestyle changes. Create shared savings arrangements where providers benefit financially from keeping patients healthy and out of the hospital.

### Administrative Reform

- **Modernize MaineCare and Bring Operational Excellence to Health and Human Services**

Launch a digital, mobile-friendly MaineCare Explanation of Benefits, modernize all health and human services platforms using user-centered design, and simplify enrollment by making CMS registration sufficient for automatic MaineCare participation, while recruiting a senior operator with Lean and Six Sigma experience and a proven small-business mindset to drive modernization, cost control, accountability, and continuous improvement across the system.

- **Reduce Administrative Burdens That Delay Care and Drive Costs**

Healthcare costs have ballooned because of administrative costs, more than care delivery. Our administration will put the care back in the hands of the doctor, limiting MaineCare prior authorization to only the highest-cost services above a clear threshold and requiring commercial insurers to pay an administrative surcharge when delayed authorizations are ultimately approved.

## X. HOUSING: Making Maine Affordable for the Next Generation

Everywhere I go, from Madawaska to Scarborough, Mainers tell me the same thing: housing has become unaffordable. Teachers, loggers, nurses, contractors, and young families who want to stay in the towns they love are being priced out. Maine faces one of the most severe housing shortages in the nation: 42,000 additional units are needed just to catch up, nearly 19 percent of homes classified as second homes, and median home prices that have doubled since 2018.<sup>xix</sup> Families are forced into bidding wars, long commutes, or out of their communities entirely. The American dream of homeownership has become a dream deferred.

My vision is simple: every working Mainers should be able to find an affordable home in the community they love, and our seniors should be able to age in their homes without the threat of losing their homes to property taxes. Housing is the foundation of economic growth, strong families, and thriving towns. If Maine wants to attract young workers, support local businesses, and keep our rural communities alive, we must first make it possible for people to live here.

The good news is that Maine can build its way out of this crisis, but only if we remove the barriers that slow or stop housing development. That means cutting red tape, modernizing

financing tools, investing in the trades, partnering with communities, and unleashing Maine's natural strengths, especially our world-class forest products industry that can lead the nation in modular and mass timber homes.

### MAINE HOUSING CRISIS: BY THE NUMBERS



Making Maine affordable for the next generation requires bold action

#### *Guiding Principles for Housing*

- **Abundance first.** Maine must build significantly more housing, starter homes, rentals, workforce housing, and senior housing across every region. Any unit of any type eases the costs across the board.
- **Speed and predictability.** Permitting and zoning should accelerate building, not block it.
- **Labor shortages limit construction capacity.** In many parts of Maine, even when permits are approved, housing cannot be built because there are simply not enough electricians, plumbers, carpenters, and tradespeople available to do the work. Any serious housing strategy must expand trade pipelines and rebuild our construction workforce.
- **Partnership over mandates.** Reward communities that build; do not punish those that struggle.

- **Innovate to lower costs.** Embrace modular, mass timber, and factory-built homes to reduce construction costs and speed up building.

### *Policy Components for Housing*

- **AI-Driven Statewide Permitting Tool - Exposing Bottlenecks and Creating Accountability**

As discussed above, we will launch a statewide permitting tool specific to housing

- **Local Third-Party Review Option – Allowing Developers to Pay for Speed**

My administration will allow developers to pay for local third-party reviewers to expedite approvals at the municipal level, giving projects the option to move faster while maintaining oversight and ensuring that communities retain control over who reviews applications. This approach delivers speed for those willing to invest in faster processing while maintaining public sector review as the default option, balancing efficiency with local authority.

- **Raise Municipal Subdivision Review Threshold to Nine Parcels**

Currently, Maine subdivision law requires municipal review when any parcel is subdivided into three or more separate parcels, impeding higher density housing by creating yet another approval point for developing housing. My administration will increase the threshold under state law for municipal review to at least nine parcels, reducing unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles for small and medium scale development while maintaining oversight for larger projects.

- **Housing Innovation Zones - Opportunity Zone Aligned Pilots for Advanced Construction**

My administration will create Housing Innovation Zones in Opportunity Zone aligned pilot areas where modular, mass timber, and factory-built construction can scale quickly without navigating traditional regulatory barriers. These zones will allow innovative models to prove themselves in real market conditions, attract private investment into rural communities that need it most, and demonstrate that Maine sourced materials and Maine workers can deliver affordable housing at the speed and scale our economy demands. Success in these pilots will inform statewide building code modernization.

- **Blockchain Pilot Zone for Fractional Real Estate Ownership**

Homeownership has become unattainable for many young Mainers who face down payments of \$50,000 or more and monthly costs they cannot afford, yet they are shut out of building equity while paying rent. My administration will create a blockchain pilot zone to experiment with fractional real estate ownership, allowing multiple buyers to own shares of a property through tokenized ownership recorded on a secure, transparent blockchain. This model enables young families to gain partial equity in a home, build wealth over time, and eventually transition to full ownership without needing to buy an entire house upfront. Fractional ownership also creates liquidity for sellers, allows friends or family members to co invest, and opens pathways to homeownership that traditional financing cannot support. Maine will lead the nation in making homeownership accessible to the next generation through innovation.

- **Modernize Housing Finance Tools: Making Homeownership Accessible Again by Marketing Assumable Mortgages for Federal and VA Loans**

My administration will make people aware of assumable mortgages that allow buyers to take over existing low-interest loans instead of refinancing at higher rates.

- **Invest in Trades to Build Homes Faster: Expanding the Construction Workforce**

Housing cannot be built without builders, and Maine faces a critical shortage of electricians, plumbers, HVAC technicians, and carpenters across every region. This policy builds on and complements the Career Ready Trades Expansion outlined in Section VII: Education, ensuring a coordinated approach to building Maine's skilled workforce across all sectors.

- **Reward Communities that Build: Aligning Incentives with Outcomes**

My administration will establish a Housing Growth Incentive Program where towns that meet housing growth targets earn bonus funding and priority access to federal and state grants for roads, schools, childcare facilities, and public safety infrastructure. This approach rewards communities that step up to build housing while providing the resources they need to manage growth responsibly. We will also provide technical assistance and regional planning support to help smaller towns collaborate on housing solutions without losing local identity.

- **Unlock State and Municipal Land for Housing: The Statewide Real Estate Commission**

Too much publicly owned land sits underutilized while Maine faces a housing crisis, creating an opportunity to convert suitable parcels into sites for workforce housing, starter homes, and community development. My administration will create a three-person Statewide Real Estate Commission charged with identifying underutilized, surplus, or strategically located public land, state, municipal, and quasi-public, that can be divested or repurposed for housing, childcare, or community needs. This excludes state parks, permanently conserved land, or working waterfront protections.

This commission will evaluate assets across the state and related entities, including the University of Maine System's 20,000 acres, and publish an annual portfolio of parcels suitable for housing or related purposes. Strategic use of public land can accelerate housing development without raising taxes or waiting for private markets to respond.

- **Expand Homestead Exemption to Support Seniors and Residents**

As discussed in the blocking and tackling section, we need to provide property tax relief for the people of Maine.

- **Ban Institutional Investors from Buying Single-Family Homes**

Prohibit large institutional investors from acquiring single-family homes meant for Maine families. Wall Street will not be allowed to buy up the starter homes that teachers, nurses, tradespeople, and young families need to put down roots. Maine's housing will serve Maine's people, not corporate rental portfolios.

- **Pause Cost-Increasing Mandates and Revert to Previous Building Codes**

My administration will temporarily pause new mandates that increase construction costs and revert to previous, less costly building codes where doing so can significantly lower construction costs without compromising safety. We will prioritize getting people housed over regulatory perfectionism, and we will ensure that every rule we keep delivers value that justifies its cost.

## XI. INFRASTRUCTURE: Building for the 21st Century

Maine ranks near the bottom nationally for infrastructure quality. Our roads are deteriorating, bridges are aging, and too many rural communities lack reliable connectivity. This is not just a quality-of-life issue. Infrastructure is economic development. Families and businesses will not stay or invest where commutes damage vehicles, bridges restrict

commerce, or internet service cannot support remote work, education, or healthcare. Infrastructure determines whether Maine competes or falls behind.

But this challenge is also an opportunity. As Maine grows its economy, creates jobs, and attracts new talent, smart infrastructure investment becomes a force multiplier. Every new employer, every remote worker, and every growing small business increases the return on infrastructure that works. In the remote-work era, Maine has a once-in-a-generation chance to reverse decades of population loss by attracting professionals who can work from anywhere. If we build a strong foundation, reliable connectivity, modern transportation, and places where people can live, work, and belong, growth reinforces itself. Talent attracts companies. Companies create jobs. Jobs strengthen communities. Infrastructure makes that cycle possible.

The stakes are especially high for rural Maine. These regions can compete nationally if they offer what modern workers and entrepreneurs need: safe roads, fast internet, and reliable access to markets. The Rural Vision Block Grants outlined in the Smart Bets section will help regions define their economic strategies, but infrastructure must be at the center of that work.

Connectivity also means mobility. In a global and remote economy, Maine must be easy to get in and out of, not only from Boston, but from major domestic and international markets. That requires strengthening service at our primary airports while expanding access from smaller regional airports and ports that connect rural Maine to larger hubs. Short-haul air routes, on-demand service, and improved ground connections can dramatically expand the reach of rural regions. We will leverage federal funding, private carriers, and demonstrated demand to sequence investments where increased connectivity can unlock immediate returns in tourism, business travel, higher education, and trade.

We must fix the basics first. At the same time, we must make targeted investments in ports, rail, air connectivity, and innovation infrastructure that unlock long-term growth. That means prioritizing ruthlessly, leveraging every available dollar, demanding accountability for results, and building infrastructure that pays for itself by expanding Maine's economy.

### ***Guiding Principles for Infrastructure***

- **Fix what fails first.** Safety and basic functionality come before expansion. Structurally deficient bridges, unsafe roadways, and water systems that fail health standards must be addressed immediately. A state of good repair is the baseline for a functional economy.

- **Invest where strategy creates opportunity.** Every infrastructure dollar must be justified by economic impact, safety improvement, or quality-of-life gains. Projects that unlock housing, enable commerce, or attract employers take priority over those driven by politics.
- **Leverage federal dollars and private capital.** Maine cannot rebuild alone. My administration will aggressively pursue federal grants, deploy public-private partnerships where appropriate, and use innovative financing to multiply the impact of state dollars. Every state dollar should unlock outside investment.
- **Demand speed and accountability.** Infrastructure projects in Maine take too long and cost too much. We will streamline reviews, pre-approve standard designs, enforce strict timelines, and hold contractors accountable. Every year of delay is a year Maine loses competitiveness.
- **Rural and urban, not rural or urban.** Infrastructure policy must serve the entire state. Rural Maine needs broadband, roads, ports, and air access. Urban corridors need transit, housing-enabling utilities, and port capacity. Both matter. Both will be built.

### *Policy Components for Infrastructure*

#### ■ **Safer Roads Today, Smarter Infrastructure for Tomorrow**

My administration will focus on reducing serious crashes, improving dangerous corridors, and repairing aging infrastructure. We will prioritize practical improvements on state-numbered roads where weather, traffic, and roadway design create real hazards. Bridge repair and replacement will remain a core responsibility of state government, pairing federal funds with sustained state investment to address structural deficiencies and weight restrictions.

As part of this work, we will lean into innovation by evaluating new and better ways of building and maintaining infrastructure, including advanced composite bridge technologies developed at the University of Maine and emerging materials like graphene that can improve strength, durability, and lifespan. We will assess how emerging vehicle technologies, including autonomous and connected vehicles, may change roadway design, safety features, and traffic flow, with a focus on improving safety, reducing long-term maintenance costs, and preparing Maine's roads for the future.

#### ■ **Dig Once, Permit Once**

My administration will implement a one-touch permitting reform for fiber deployment by coordinating across state, county, and local jurisdictions. We will mandate conduit installation during all state-funded road projects to reduce costs, speed broadband deployment, and eliminate redundant construction.

### ■ **Build for the Future to Make Maine an Arctic trade Center**

As outlined in the Smart Bets section, Maine will implement a coordinated strategy for its deep-water ports at Eastport, Searsport, and Portland to capitalize on emerging Arctic shipping routes, expand cold-chain logistics capacity, and support resilient national security supply chains. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for our state and will be guided by the Governor's Council on Arctic Competitiveness, ensuring Maine has the infrastructure necessary to attract private capital and global trade activity.

### ■ **Fast-Track Passenger Rail to Boston**

My administration will negotiate with relevant parties to establish true express passenger rail service between Maine and Boston, with morning and evening departures that bypass unnecessary stops and materially reduce travel times. We will work with the Federal Railroad Administration to upgrade rail corridors where targeted improvements can reduce travel time by as much as 30 minutes per change. Fast, reliable rail expands access to Boston's labor, capital, and innovation markets while allowing Maine professionals to live and build their lives here instead of relocating.

### ■ **International Flight Capability at the Portland Jetport**

As outlined in the Smart Bets section, my administration will add full U.S. Customs and Border Protection capability at the Portland International Jetport to enable direct international service. This investment will strengthen Maine's global connectivity, support business and tourism growth, and improve access for international trade and higher education partnerships.

### ■ **Expand Regional Air or Water Connectivity: Moving People to Markets**

In a remote-work economy, regions compete on how easily people can get in and out, and in much of Maine that friction is highest where opportunity is greatest. My administration will treat smaller regional airports, short-haul air service, and high-speed water transit as core economic infrastructure.

We will leverage federal aviation funding, private capital, and public-private partnerships to improve service, terminal efficiency, ground connections, and hub-linking routes that connect rural Maine to major domestic and international markets. We will partner with innovative mobility providers to deploy solutions that were not previously possible, expanding opportunity across the state.

### ■ **Transportation Solutions for Tourism Economies, Connecting Workers to Jobs**

In tourism-driven regions such as southern York County, businesses struggle to hire because workers cannot afford nearby housing and lack reliable transportation. My administration will pilot seasonal transit routes linking workforce housing in communities such as Sanford, Biddeford, and southern New Hampshire with coastal employment centers including Cape Neddick, Ogunquit, and Wells.

We will partner with tourism employers to co-fund commuter shuttles during peak seasons and deploy flexible, on-demand transit solutions where fixed routes are not viable, helping businesses hire while reducing congestion and parking pressure in coastal communities.

### ■ **Public-Private Partnerships: Leveraging Private Capital for Public Benefit**

Maine cannot rebuild its infrastructure relying on state tax dollars alone. Public-private partnerships allow the state to leverage private capital, transfer risk away from taxpayers, accelerate project delivery, and enforce performance standards tied to results rather than political timelines.

My administration will appoint a Director of Infrastructure Finance and Business Development, jointly positioned within the Department of Transportation and the Department of Economic and Community Development, to ensure Maine can deliver complex infrastructure investments efficiently, responsibly, and at scale.

## **XII. ENERGY: Low-Cost Power to Fuel Maine's Comeback**

Maine has the 5th highest electricity prices in America and the most unreliable grid in the country, and it is crushing working families, seniors on fixed incomes, and businesses trying to grow. Our electricity prices have grown faster than any state in the country over the last five years, and in 2024 they grew at twice the rate of any other state in the nation. High energy costs are one of the biggest barriers to job growth in Maine and a daily burden on working families trying to heat their homes or pay their bills.

Maine's net energy billing program has become an extreme outlier nationally, forcing ratepayers to subsidize solar power at 20-plus cents per kilowatt hour, several times market rates, sending roughly \$250 million a year<sup>xx</sup>, nearly 10 percent of all electricity costs, to a small number of developers while costs are passed directly onto Mainers. Solar production collapses in the winter when Maine needs power most, leaving us dependent on imported LNG and oil at up to ten times the cost of normal generation, making it nearly impossible to build ships, manufacture advanced materials, grow life sciences, or power AI-enabled industries on top of such unstable and inflated energy prices.

The path forward is clear: Maine needs a short-term plan to stabilize energy costs with affordable baseload power and a long-term plan to become truly energy independent. This means lowering prices now by tapping low-cost hydroelectricity from Québec, or by fighting to get Massachusetts to build a natural gas pipeline, while simultaneously investing in next generation baseload sources like nuclear and small modular reactors so Maine can produce its own clean, reliable power for decades to come. We must also realign utility incentives, so companies are rewarded for improving grid efficiency and lowering system costs, not simply for spending more money to earn a guaranteed return on assets.

We have led in this space before. One of the nation's leading nuclear maintenance and manufacturing hubs sits in Kittery at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Maine can leverage this heritage to lead again, not only by using nuclear power, but also by becoming a state that builds and services small modular reactors (SMR), creating world class jobs in engineering, trades, and advanced manufacturing.

Energy affordability is not an ideological issue. It is an economic necessity and a working-class issue. If we are serious about supporting families, attracting employers, and powering the industries of the future, lowering energy costs must be at the center of Maine's economic strategy.

## MAINE'S ENERGY COST CRISIS

### THE PROBLEM



#### HIGH ENERGY COSTS

- Blocking employer expansion
- Thousands struggle with heating & utility bills



#### AFFORDABILITY FOR WORKING CLASS MAINERS AND INDUSTRY AT RISK

### BY THE NUMBERS

**5TH HIGHEST**  
Electricity Costs in U.S.



**#1** MOST UNRELIABLE  
Grid in the Nation



**~10%** of electricity costs  
go to solar subsidies



**\$250M**  
Annual solar subsidies  
out of \$2.5B market



**20+ ¢/kwh**  
Forced solar price  
Above market rates



**10X**  
Winter LNG/oil costs  
vs. normal generation



### Guiding Principles for Energy

- **Lowering costs is the primary goal.** Maine families and businesses cannot wait a decade for relief. We must secure low-cost baseload power now.
- **Build toward energy independence.** Maine should generate its own reliable, low-cost power and drive energy independence
- **Reliability is foundational.** Our grid must prioritize reliability and consumer protection, ensuring that Maine families, seniors on fixed incomes, and small businesses have dependable, affordable power that supports advanced manufacturing, EVs, heat pumps, and digital infrastructure without outages or unexpected cost spikes.
- **Technology neutral, affordability focused.** Use the best tools available, nuclear, hydro, wind, solar, gas, based on cost and reliability, not ideology.
- **No Amateurs in the Control Room.** Energy policy affects every home and business in Maine. The people making decisions about generation, transmission, and rates must have technical credibility and operational experience.

### Policy Components for Energy

#### Near-Term Strategy: Stabilize Prices with Low-Cost Baseload Power

- **End the Hidden Public Policy Charge, Reduce It, and Move It into the State Budget**

The public policy charge on electricity bills is a hidden cost paid by every Mainers. It has ballooned in recent years, driven largely by the net energy billing program. Under my administration, this charge will be removed from electric bills and, if funded at all, debated openly as part of the state budget. We will work to return it to LePage-era levels or lower and fight to eliminate. This approach makes the cost transparent, accountable, and gives us a clear opportunity to lower the burden of extra fees and taxes on Maine families and businesses.

- **The Baseload Affordability Deal: Buy More Affordable Hydro from Canada**

The New England Clean Energy Connect is now complete, there is more capacity on the lines, and my administration will negotiate long term power purchase agreements to buy as much stable, low-cost hydropower from Québec as the transmission line's capacity allows, locking in affordable rates for Maine ratepayers. This delivers reliable baseload power at prices far below what Maine currently pays. This is necessary until we build generation capacity in Maine in the longer term.

- **Move Aggressively on Regional Natural Gas Capacity through the Algonquin Expansion**

Maine cannot afford to remain energy-constrained while families and employers pay the price. As Governor, I will move aggressively, alongside fellow New England governors, to advance a targeted expansion of the Algonquin natural gas system, working with industry and federal regulators to increase capacity into the region. This expansion can be achieved largely within existing rights-of-way by replacing undersized pipeline segments with larger pipe, adding parallel pipeline loops along current corridors, and expanding compressor stations to safely boost throughput. By modernizing infrastructure where it already exists, we can move faster, reduce permitting risk, and actually get this built. Affordable, reliable energy is essential for economic growth, housing affordability, and winter reliability, and Maine will lead a coordinated New England effort to deliver it.

- **Cut Net Energy Billing Program and Negotiate Buyout of Existing Contracts**

The Net Energy Billing program forces ratepayers to subsidize solar installations at rates far above market value, adding hundreds of millions of dollars to electricity bills while delivering power primarily when Maine needs it least. My administration will phase out the

Net Energy Billing program for new installations and negotiate buyouts of existing contracts to reduce the burden on working families and businesses. Solar has a role in Maine's energy mix, but it must compete on cost, not survive on mandated subsidies that raise prices for everyone else.

- **Recruit Experts with Real Experience in Energy Generation, Distribution, and Finance**

My administration will recruit engineers, utility operators, and energy economists with real world grid management, and energy finance experience to lead Maine's energy strategy, not political appointees. This includes in the administration, public utilities commission, and public advocate. Energy policy is too important to be run by people who do not understand how power systems work. We will create a unified, long term energy strategy that plans for reliability, affordability, and economic competitiveness, ensuring Maine's energy future is built on expertise, not ideology.

- **Amend Maine's Renewable Portfolio Standard to Remove Cap on Hydro and Biomass and include Nuclear**

Maine's Renewable Portfolio Standard, first implemented in 1999, forces utilities to purchase electricity from specific renewable sources at above market rates, increasing costs for families and businesses while doing little to reduce emissions. This standard doesn't include projects that have hydro greater than 100MW. My administration will amend the Renewable Portfolio Standard to recognize the reality that all quantities of hydro, biomass and nuclear (18%-20 of ISO-NE grid on a daily basis comes from nuclear energy already) are renewable.

### **Longer-Term Strategy: More Production, More Competition, Lower Prices**

- **Reverse Restrictions on Nuclear Energy and Begin Feasibility Studies**

Maine's ban on new nuclear development is an outdated barrier to affordable, clean baseload power that other states are embracing while we fall behind. My administration will lift Maine's restrictions on nuclear energy, starting by allowing feasibility studies for modern reactors, and create a regulatory pathway for small modular reactors and next generation nuclear technologies including fusion.

- **Lay Groundwork for Small Modular Reactors: Build Energy Independence, Create Long-Term Jobs, and Fund Education**

Position Maine to become a manufacturing hub for next-generation nuclear power. Maine has the expertise and talent, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and Maine Maritime's nuclear energy program give us a foundation no other state can match. Deploying SMRs in Maine will free us from imported energy, stabilize costs for families and businesses, and give us control over our energy future. SMRs generate far more power than Maine needs, allowing us to sell excess electricity to high-demand markets like Massachusetts and Connecticut. The revenue from these power sales will fund the Katahdin Horizon Partnership, support education initiatives, and create a path to eliminate the income tax, turning Maine's energy infrastructure into an economic engine that pays for itself while powering our comeback.

### ■ **Increase Transmission Capacity to Canada via Underground Infrastructure**

My administration will develop additional transmission connections with Québec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia to improve reliability and energy security, using underground infrastructure where feasible to minimize environmental impact and community opposition. An example would be the repurposing of the out of commission Portland oil pipeline from Montreal to Portland to run electric lines through it.

### ■ **Sell Excess Summer Solar to New England Creating Revenue Streams**

My administration will pursue targeted transmission upgrades to move power south into Massachusetts and Connecticut, allowing Maine to export excess summer solar generation into higher-demand markets. This creates new revenue streams that help lower Maine ratepayer costs while supporting regional clean-energy goals. By easing congestion and maximizing export capability, we can turn summer solar surpluses from a seasonal challenge into a durable economic asset for Maine families.

resources.

### ■ **Change Utility Incentives from Assets to Performance**

My administration will reform utility compensation by shifting a portion of utility earnings away from a model that primarily rewards building capital assets and toward a performance-based, shared-savings approach that prioritizes efficiency, reliability, and lower costs for ratepayers. Utilities will be able to earn returns by reducing system costs, improving service quality, and avoiding unnecessary infrastructure investments, not simply by putting more steel in the ground. This reform will encourage private investment in grid-scale battery storage to reduce peak demand costs and manage renewable intermittency; deploy smart-grid technologies, including advanced sensors, automation, and AI-enabled

system management, to optimize performance and prevent outages; support community-scale microgrids around critical facilities in rural Maine; and modernize interconnection and planning rules to use advanced forecasting and data-driven tools.

### XIII. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Building the Talent That Can Power Maine's Comeback

Maine cannot compete in the Fourth Industrial Revolution without a workforce strategy built for the future. Today, too many employers, from shipyards and hospitals to biotech labs, childcare centers, and small manufacturers, cannot find the skilled workers they need. At the same time, too many Mainers, parents, mid-career workers, veterans, seniors, and young people, are shut out of opportunities because the systems designed to support them are slow, outdated, and disconnected.

As an engineer, an employer, and a builder of teams, I know the power of a well-aligned workforce strategy. When we built MedRhythms, we recruited neuroscientists, engineers, clinicians, and manufacturing talent to Maine because we believed in this state's potential. But we also saw the truth: Maine's systems were not designed for speed, alignment, or scale.

The next decade demands something very different: a talent system that is fast, flexible, family-centered, employer-aligned, and regional by design. A system that meets parents where they are with childcare, meets workers where they are with training, and meets employers where they are with skills pipelines tailored to their needs. Maine can be the best state in America for workers and employers, but only if we build a modern workforce system worthy of our people and aligned with our Smart Bets.

This section lays out that strategy: childcare as economic infrastructure, licensing reform, reskilling pathways, talent attraction, support for veterans and seniors, and employer-driven partnerships that connect Mainers directly to jobs that provide dignity, stability, and upward mobility.

#### *Guiding Principles for Workforce Development*

- **Every Mainer deserves a pathway to dignity, stability, and upward mobility.**  
Workforce policy must start with the belief that talent is everywhere, in every town, at every age, and that systems should help people rise, not block their potential.

- **Childcare is economic infrastructure.** Parents cannot work, train, or advance in their careers without reliable, affordable childcare. Workforce development must integrate childcare as a central economic priority, not an afterthought.
- **Employers must lead and the state must follow with speed.** Workforce systems must be driven by employer demand, not guessing games. Programs should be co-designed with industry and updated continuously to match the skills needed in maritime innovation, life sciences, advanced forest products, and healthcare.
- **Credentials must be short, stackable, portable, and aligned.** Maine must prioritize credentials that deliver immediate value and stack into higher-wage pathways without forcing people to choose between income and advancement.
- **Older workers, veterans, caregivers, and returning citizens are part of the workforce solution.** Maine cannot succeed by focusing only on young workers; we must tap the full breadth of Maine's talent and make entry and re-entry easy, supported, and stigma free.
- **AI and automation should lift workers, not leave them behind.** Maine must ensure that every worker can access the training, tools, and support to compete in an AI accelerated economy and that displaced workers have guaranteed pathways into higher wage roles.

### *Policy Components for Workforce Development*

- **The "Skills First" Executive Order: Remove Degree Requirements in State Government and Focus on Competencies**

My administration will eliminate degree requirements from state government jobs and instead focus on the specific competencies and credentials required for each position. This reform opens pathways for talented Mainers who have skills and experience but lack formal degrees, recognizing that competence matters more than credentials, and that too many capable workers are excluded by unnecessary barriers.

- **Fix the Benefits Cliff: Always Make Work Pay**

Maine's current benefits system too often punishes work as families lose childcare assistance, healthcare support, or food benefits the moment they earn slightly more, creating a trap that keeps people in poverty and keeps employers from finding the workers they desperately need. My administration will replace abrupt cutoffs with gradual, predictable, sliding scale transitions to ensure that Mainers are always financially better off

for working more hours, taking a promotion, or pursuing advanced training. This includes transitional income disregards, coordinated benefit phase outs across all programs, and personalized benefits counseling so families can make informed decisions. Maine will become a national model for a modern safety net that supports work, not penalizes it.

### ■ **Displaced Workers Fund - Ensuring No Mainer Is Left Behind**

To ensure no Mainer is left behind in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, my administration will establish a fully subsidized Displaced Workers Fund (as referenced in the AI and Digital Assets policy above) and embed it into a network of Regional Rapid Retraining Centers to help workers displaced by AI, automation, economic shifts, or layoffs transition into careers in digital services, healthcare, finance, education, technology, and advanced manufacturing.

### ■ **Comprehensive Childcare Overhaul - Treating Childcare as Economic Infrastructure**

Working parents cannot participate in the economy without childcare, yet Maine's system is collapsing under the weight of low wages, staffing shortages, and costs families cannot afford. My administration will overhaul the system through a true cost of care model that stabilizes providers without increasing taxes by realigning existing subsidies, expand Level 1 through 3 childcare workforce pathways through MCCS and UMS, and provide startup and operating supports to rebuild childcare capacity in rural areas.

### ■ **Licensing Modernization and Reciprocity for a Faster, Fairer Labor Market**

Maine's licensing system creates unnecessary barriers for too many qualified workers, preventing them from working immediately when they move here or transition careers. My administration will enact fast track reciprocity for out of state licenses, fast track license approvals, and eliminate outdated or protectionist requirements that do not improve public safety, while piloting alternative credential models such as voluntary certification or registration systems to open doors into high need fields.

### ■ **Veterans and Seniors Workforce Strategy: Tapping Maine's Most Skilled Assets**

Maine's 120,000 veterans and large senior population represent two of our most skilled yet underutilized workforce assets. My administration will build defense and tech pathways for transitioning service members and launch a Veterans Business Accelerator to support veteran entrepreneurs. For seniors, we will build a Senior Wisdom Economy with encore

career programs, mentorship networks, consulting pathways, and part time roles that let older Mainers contribute their expertise while maintaining flexible schedules

- **AI-Enabled Career Navigation, Social Capital Building, and Job Matching System**

My administration will launch a statewide AI-powered Workforce Navigation System that helps every Mainer understand their strengths, distill their work experience into clear skills-based profiles, learn how to build social capital, and match them to real job opportunities, including remote work, in real time.

This system will integrate with training providers, employers, and Rapid Retraining Centers to identify career pathways aligned with everyone's skills, recommend short term credentials that raise wages quickly, connect workers with employers hiring today, and provide personalized guidance to help workers advance over time.

## XIV. CHILD PROTECTION: Keeping Maine's Children Safe

At least 155 children died from 2019 through part of 2024 in cases where Maine's Office of Child and Family Services was involved<sup>xxi</sup>. Read that number again. 155 children. These are not statistics on a spreadsheet in Augusta. These are children with names, with faces, with families who loved them. Children who deserved protection and did not receive it. Children who died while the state was supposed to be keeping them safe.

And what has been the response from Augusta? Silence. No accountability. No urgency. No plan to fix a broken system that keeps failing the most vulnerable Mainers we have. The Mills administration has overseen this crisis for years without demanding answers, without firing people who failed to do their jobs, and without treating these deaths with the moral seriousness they deserve.

The late Senator Bill Diamond understood what was at stake. He championed child welfare reform because he knew that every failure of this system costs a child their future or their life. He demanded accountability and fought for change. Meanwhile, caseworkers are overwhelmed with unmanageable caseloads that make it impossible to give each child the attention they deserve. Foster families wait months for support and reimbursement. Investigations drag on while children remain in dangerous situations. And the focus is too often on managing the bureaucracy rather than protecting kids.

My administration will follow Bill Diamond's vision to rebuild Maine's child welfare system from the ground up with one clear standard: no more children die on our watch because

the system failed them. We will reduce caseworker caseloads to manageable levels, recruit and support foster families, prioritize prevention so fewer children enter the system, streamline investigations so children are protected quickly, and create clear pathways to permanency for every child in care. We will hold people accountable when they fail to do their jobs. This is not about more bureaucracy. It is about results. And the result we care about is simple: every Maine child grows up safe.

### ***Guiding Principles for Child Protection***

- **One death is too many.** Child protection is not a policy issue. Every failure, every missed warning sign, every bureaucratic delay can cost a child their life.
- **Children come first.** Every decision, every policy, and every resource allocation must prioritize the safety, wellbeing, and future of Maine's children.
- **Prevention is better than intervention.** Supporting struggling families before crises occur keeps children safe, reduces trauma, and costs less than emergency removals.
- **Swift action saves lives.** When children are at risk, investigations and interventions must happen quickly.
- **Foster families are heroes and must be treated that way.** Recruiting, training, supporting, and compensating foster families is essential to child welfare.
- **Accountability and transparency.** DHHS must be held accountable for outcomes, not just process. Mainers deserve to know how many children are in care, how long they stay, and what happens to them.

The following are policy recommendations that will guide my administration's approach to child protection:

### ***Policy Components for Child Protection***

- **Create a Standalone Office of Child Protective Services with Clear Accountability**

My administration will separate Child Protective Services from the broader Department of Health and Human Services and establish it as an independent agency with a singular mission: keeping Maine children safe. A standalone Office of Child Protective Services will have its own commissioner, protected budget, dedicated training and supervision structure, and direct accountability to the Governor and Legislature. This reform will end diffuse responsibility, elevate child protection as a public safety function, and make outcomes transparent and measurable.

### ■ **Hire a Wartime Leader: Enough Is Enough**

Child protection is in crisis, and crisis demands leadership with urgency, accountability, and the courage to demand results. My administration will recruit a commissioner with a track record of turning around failing systems, someone who understands that every day of delay costs children their safety and their lives. This leader will have the authority to make immediate personnel changes, reallocate resources, and cut through bureaucracy that has allowed children to fall through the cracks.

### ■ **Rebuild the Workforce: Lower Caseloads, Improve Pay, Strengthen Training**

No system can function when caseworkers are overwhelmed, underpaid, and undertrained. My administration will set enforceable caseload standards and hire additional frontline staff to meet them, improve compensation and establish clear career ladders to retain experienced workers, expand pre service and ongoing training with hands on mentorship and supervision, fix intake and screening protocols to ensure high risk cases are escalated immediately, expand preventive and family support services including substance use treatment and mental health care, and strengthen foster, kinship, and adoption supports to ensure every child in care has a path to permanency. Caseworkers are on the front lines of child safety, and we will give them the tools, training, and support they need to succeed.

### ■ **Strengthen Coordination with Law Enforcement, Courts, and Healthcare**

Child safety depends on information sharing and rapid response across agencies. Maine will strengthen coordination between CPS, law enforcement, schools, healthcare providers, and the courts so critical warning signs are not missed. We will establish joint investigation protocols, create real time information sharing systems, improve risk assessment tools, and ensure professional judgment is supported rather than overridden by box checking. When a child is at risk, every agency must act as one.

### ■ **Require Ongoing Independent Oversight and Citizen Audits**

Maine will require regular independent reviews of CPS performance, caseloads, outcomes, and leadership accountability conducted by outside experts and citizen oversight boards, so problems are identified and corrected before tragedy occurs. Every child death or serious injury will trigger an automatic external review with findings made public. Sunlight and accountability will drive continuous improvement.

## **XV. PUBLIC SAFETY: Protecting Our Communities**

For generations, Maine has been one of the safest states in America. A place where parents felt comfortable letting their kids walk to school, where neighbors watched out for one another, and where first responders were always there when we needed them. Today, that foundation is cracked. The signs are visible across the state: growing homelessness, public drug use, discarded needles in parks and neighborhoods, and a sense that basic order is slipping in places that never used to feel that way.

What was once framed as compassion has, in too many cases, drifted away from recovery and accountability. Harm reduction without standards has left communities littered with needles and families feeling powerless to protect their children. Open drug use has become normalized, while treatment, recovery, and enforcement have fallen behind. This is not humane. It is not compassionate. And it is not working.

The data confirms what Mainers see every day. Maine recorded hundreds of fatal overdoses last year, among the highest per capita rates in New England.<sup>xxii</sup> More than two thousand people experienced homelessness on a single winter night.<sup>xxiii</sup> At the same time, organized criminal networks have taken advantage of weak enforcement and limited oversight. Illegal marijuana grow houses tied to Chinese transnational trafficking organizations have spread across rural Maine, exploiting housing stock, electricity infrastructure, and local law enforcement capacity.<sup>xxiv</sup> These operations fuel money laundering, human exploitation, and drug distribution, while undercutting legitimate businesses that follow the law.

Bangor has increasingly become the end of the line, not just for Maine, but for the broader region. People struggling with addiction, homelessness, and mental illness are pushed north as services and enforcement break down elsewhere. What begins in Portland or beyond our borders often ends in Bangor, overwhelming shelters, hospitals, police, and emergency responders who were never resourced for this scale of crisis.

Compounding this breakdown is a justice system under severe strain. Maine's public defender shortage has reached a constitutional crisis, delaying cases, denying timely representation, and leaving victims and defendants alike stuck in limbo. Cashless bail reforms, implemented without sufficient safeguards or system capacity, have eroded public confidence that dangerous individuals will be held accountable while awaiting trial. Police officers make arrests only to see the same individuals released repeatedly, not because officers failed, but because the system no longer functions as intended.

Safety is the prerequisite for opportunity, community, and economic growth. If families do not feel safe, nothing else matters. If businesses cannot rely on basic order and emergency response, they will not invest. And if Maine allows disorder, organized crime, and systemic failure to become the norm, the consequences will fall hardest on working families and rural communities.

Maine needs a new era of public safety rooted in accountability, prevention, enforcement, treatment, and community standards. That means restoring order in our cities, insisting that harm reduction leads to recovery, dismantling trafficking and illegal grow operations, rebuilding our public defense and EMS systems, and ensuring that every Mainer, from Portland to Presque Isle, can count on a justice system and emergency response that works.

### ***Guiding Principles for Public Safety***

- **Support those who serve.** Law enforcement, firefighters, and EMS personnel put their lives on the line every day. They deserve competitive pay, modern equipment, comprehensive training, and the respect of the communities they protect.
- **Rural Maine deserves the same protection as urban Maine.** Distance should not determine safety. Every community, regardless of size or location, deserves adequate law enforcement coverage and emergency response.
- **The fentanyl crisis is a public safety emergency.** We will treat it as such, combining aggressive enforcement against traffickers with compassionate treatment for those struggling with addiction.
- **Border security protects everyone.** Securing Maine's northern border is essential to public safety, economic security, and maintaining trust in our immigration system.
- **Prevention and community policing work.** The best public safety strategy combines strong enforcement with community relationships, youth programs, and investments that prevent crime before it happens.
- **Accountability and professionalism matter.** Law enforcement must be held to the highest standards of conduct, training, and accountability to maintain public trust.

### ***Policy Components for Public Safety***

#### **Justice System:**

### ■ **Fund the Justice System at the Same Level as Our Neighbors**

Public safety depends on a justice system that functions at every stage. Maine will increase funding for law enforcement, district attorneys, and public defenders together, benchmarked to staffing and pay levels in neighboring states like New Hampshire. Competitive compensation and manageable caseloads are essential to constitutional justice, swift accountability, and public trust.

### ■ **Invest in Police Recruitment and Retention to Ensure Statewide Coverage**

Maine's law enforcement agencies struggle to recruit and retain qualified officers, leaving departments understaffed and communities underserved. My administration will increase competitive pay for law enforcement to match or exceed neighboring states, expand training and professional development opportunities, create clear career advancement pathways, provide modern equipment and technology, and support officer wellness programs that address the mental and physical demands of the job. This ensures we get assistance out to places that have a law enforcement need, such as Washington County.

### ■ **Fix the Public Defender Crisis**

Maine will close the funding gap in the public defense system, raise compensation, expand staffing, and expand the regional public defender offices to ensure timely representation statewide. Lack of constitutionally required legal representation threatens to force the release of dangerous alleged criminals back into our neighborhoods. Justice delayed is justice denied for victims and defendants alike.

### ■ **Eliminate Cashless Bail to Protect Safety and Support Treatment**

Maine will eliminate cashless bail. While well intentioned, it has failed to account for addiction, mental illness, and repeat offending. Judges will have the authority to impose conditions, supervision, or holding people until they get treatment to protect public safety and create opportunities for stabilization and recovery.

### ■ **Keeping Maine Communities Safe Through Cooperation**

As governor, I will ensure that state and local law enforcement lawfully cooperates with federal authorities to protect public safety. If Maine does not cooperate with federal partners on serious criminal activity, we leave our communities more vulnerable to organized crime, trafficking, and exploitation. Maine must crack down on illegal marijuana grow operations that are part of multi-state criminal networks tied to labor exploitation,

illegal immigration, human trafficking, and the illicit drug trade. These operations harm communities, exploit vulnerable people, and undermine the rule of law.

When an illegal immigrant is arrested for a crime and booked into a county jail, state and local law enforcement should communicate with federal authorities to ensure that dangerous individuals are deported instead of being released back into our communities. This approach keeps enforcement focused on the jail setting rather than through street-level actions in neighborhoods.

My administration will prioritize public safety while respecting due process, constitutional protections, and civil liberties. I believe in legal immigration, and Maine should continue to welcome those who follow the law and contribute to our communities, while ensuring that enforcement is targeted, lawful, and focused on serious criminal activity.

### ■ **Restore Safety and Order in Cities While Protecting Dignity**

Maine will empower cities to enforce public nuisance and encampment laws constitutionally while ensuring access to treatment, shelter, and job training. Compassion requires both standards and support.

#### **Drugs:**

### ■ **Target Traffickers and Organized Crime, Not People Seeking Help**

Maine will focus enforcement on fentanyl traffickers, organized criminal networks, and illegal marijuana grow operations tied to human trafficking and money laundering. Resources will be directed at those who profit from addiction and exploitation, not individuals seeking treatment.

### ■ **Pursue High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Designation**

Maine will aggressively lobby for federal High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area designation for Lewiston, Portland, and Bangor to secure additional federal resources, intelligence support, and enforcement funding. These cities are critical nodes in Maine's drug trafficking and distribution networks and deserve the same level of federal support as similarly affected regions across the country.

### ■ **End 100-to-1 Needle Distribution Without a Path to Recovery**

Maine will eliminate the 100-to-1 needle exchange model, where harm reduction programs distribute 100 needles for every one needle returned, and replace it with recovery-oriented

harm reduction that prioritizes treatment entry, accountability, and public health without sacrificing public order or community safety.

### ■ **Expand Treatment and Recovery, Including Faith-Based Programs**

Maine will expand detox, residential treatment, drug courts, and long-term recovery housing using opioid settlement funds. Highly effective faith-based recovery programs will be eligible for support and partnerships alongside secular providers, based on outcomes and accountability.

## XV. GOVERNMENT MODERNIZATION: Making Government Work

Maine's government is still operating as if it were 1988. Paper forms move slowly from desk to desk. Phone lines go unanswered. Websites fail or confuse. Agencies cannot see what each other is doing, and Mainers have no way to track applications or know whether their request is moving forward or lost entirely. This is not just frustrating. It weakens trust, wastes public money, and limits the state's ability to serve the people who depend on it.

For years, government struggled to fix these problems because building software used to be genuinely hard. Technology was expensive, rigid, and dependent on massive contracts that locked states into outdated systems. They used a waterfall approach where laws defined requirements, not users.

The world has changed. Cloud computing, modern development tools, and artificial intelligence have dramatically lowered the cost and complexity of building digital systems. What once required large teams and long timelines can now be done by small, focused groups working iteratively. AI can write software, integrate data across agencies, flag errors in real time, and continuously improve how services are delivered. The size of government can and should be reduced. The scope and efficiency will increase through the application of artificial intelligence. AI training will be a priority for all state employees.

This moment is especially powerful for Maine. We can rebuild from first principles. We can design services around users rather than bureaucracy, share platforms across agencies, and finally give public servants the tools they need to do their jobs well.

Technology alone is not enough. Modernization requires culture change, and culture change requires leadership. As governor, I will appoint a Chief Digital Officer reporting directly to me, with the authority to drive digital transformation across agencies, integrate

systems, manage major technology investments, and enforce performance standards. We will build in-house technology capacity, so Maine owns its core systems, reduces reliance on consultants, and attracts top technical talent into public service.

I am prepared to lead this moment because I have done this work before. As an engineer and entrepreneur, I have built complex software in regulated, high-stakes environments where reliability, security, and accountability mattered every day. I understand both what modern technology makes possible and what disciplined execution requires.

### ***Guiding Principles for Government Modernization***

- **Results over process.** Programs, regulations, and systems will be judged by speed, cost, quality, and impact, not by adherence to internal procedures.
- **Designed around people (i.e. human-centered design focused).** If a service is confusing, slow, or inaccessible, it is broken and must be redesigned.
- **Digital by default, human when needed.** This will be delivered digitally by default while remaining accessible, responsive, and supported by real people when needed. Technology must reduce friction, not create new barriers.
- **Seamless service.** Maine will operate as an integrated enterprise with shared data, coordinated workflows, and aligned accountability across agencies.
- **Accountability and internal capacity.** Every system will have clear ownership, measurable standards, and consequences for failure. Maine will build in house capability and leadership to sustain modernization over time.

### ***Policy Components for Government Modernization***

#### **■ Appoint a Chief Digital Officer to Lead Transformation**

My administration will appoint a Chief Digital Officer (CDO) for the State of Maine who will report directly to the Governor and have cabinet level authority to drive digital transformation across every agency. The CDO will be responsible for setting statewide digital strategy, managing major technology investments and ensuring they deliver measurable results, partnering with world-class technology partners, holding agencies accountable for adopting modern tools and meeting digital service standards, and building the talent pipeline Maine needs to sustain modernization over the long term.

#### **■ Create the Go BUILD Maine Department - A Results-Driven Implementation Engine**

My administration will repurpose the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GO PIF) into the GO BUILD Maine Department (Boosting Utility, Innovation, and Lean Delivery), reporting directly to the governor. This department will serve as the state's internal execution and transformation team, responsible for leading cross agency modernization initiatives, taking control of stalled or failing projects, deploying private sector delivery and procurement methods, and ensuring clear accountability for results. Go BUILD Maine will be staffed with a Chief Digital Officer, senior project and product managers, AI and data engineers, systems engineers, and regulatory and agency experts who bring real world experience in shipping products and driving change.

### ■ **Launch Maine Online Now: Digital Government Infrastructure**

My administration will launch Maine Online Now to digitize all core state services and replace paper-based workflows with secure, cloud-based platforms. Maine Online Now will put every license, permit, and application online with simple, mobile friendly interfaces, create a single business portal for permits and licenses that consolidates fragmented processes, publish enforceable timelines for regulatory decisions so businesses and families know when to expect answers, and implement secure digital identity with strong privacy protections so Mainers can access services safely.

### ■ **Pilot Blockchain for Government Records and Real-World Assets**

Blockchain technology offers a secure, transparent, and tamper proof way to manage government records, reduce fraud, and increase public trust. My administration will launch a Blockchain Pilot Program for high value use cases including property deeds and land records following Wyoming's model, professional licenses and certifications to prevent fraud and enable instant verification, vehicle titles to streamline transfers and eliminate disputes, and vital records including birth certificates, marriage licenses, and death certificates.

### ■ **Launch Maine VetsConnect - High-Speed Internet and One Portal for Every Veteran**

My administration will launch Maine VetsConnect with three pillars. First, high speed internet for every veteran: through Starlink satellite internet, the state will provide reliable broadband to any veteran who does not currently have it. Second, one smart portal: VetsConnect will replace disconnected websites with one secure, streamlined experience where a few quick questions show veterans every state, federal, or local benefit they may qualify for, a single digital profile replaces dozens of paper forms, and real time tracking

allows veterans to monitor applications instead of making endless phone calls. Third, one on one guidance: local Veterans Service Officers will remain at the center of the process, equipped with better tools and technology to serve veterans directly.

### ■ **Deploy Technology Fellows to Embed Modern Leadership in Agencies**

My administration will create a Maine Technology Fellows Program to embed senior technical leadership directly inside state agencies. Each major department will have a Technology Fellow reporting directly to the Commissioner, selected through a competitive, fixed term appointment process.

### ■ **Build In-House State Technology Capacity**

For too long, Maine has outsourced critical technology work, weakening internal confidence and capability. Maine has also outlawed best-in-class technology instead of learning to use it responsibly. No more. We will train state employees on modern tools, including AI, and encourage them to share best practices with colleagues across agencies. By building a culture that rewards learning, problem-solving, and accountability, we will reduce dependence on consultants and create a government that improves itself year after year.

## PART IV: A MAINE WORTH FIGHTING FOR

### Closing: A Maine Worth Fighting For

Maine has always been a place where hard work meets opportunity, where people believe in their communities, care for their neighbors, and build lives rooted in the values that define this state. From the shadow of Katahdin to the mill towns, shipyards, forests, and fishing villages that shaped us, Maine's story has always been about people who step up, take responsibility, and build things that last.

But today, too many Mainers feel the deck is stacked against them. Costs are rising, opportunity is shrinking, and families wonder whether their children will be able to build a future here. The promise that once defined Maine, the promise that if you work hard, you can build a good life, has been eroded by systems that cost too much, deliver too little, and feel impossible to navigate.

It does not have to be this way.

This plan, Maine 2040, is a call to rebuild the foundation of our state with the same principles that built our greatest achievements. It is directly connected to the opening of this blueprint, because everything comes back to the same simple question: Will Maine be a place where our kids can build their future? To answer yes, we must restore the values that have always defined us.

Opportunity for every Mainer to build a career and a life here, the same opportunity that took a kid from Patten picking rocks in a potato field to building a company that used AI to help people walk again.

Affordability so working families can stay in the communities they love because a future in Maine means nothing if people can't afford to live here.

Discipline to deliver a government that works as hard as the people who fund it, lean, modern, accountable, and focused on results, not bureaucracy.

With these principles, we can build a Maine where a child in Patten or Portland can dream big and stay to pursue that dream. A Maine where housing is attainable, energy is affordable, healthcare is accessible, schools prepare kids for the future, and businesses can grow without fighting their own government.

This beginning and this ending are tied together by the same belief: Maine can lead again. We have done it before, in our forests, on our oceans, in our research labs, and across our communities. We will do it again by choosing courage over complacency, action over drift, and a bold vision over incremental decline.

I never forgot where I came from, and I will never stop fighting for the Maine we deserve, for working families, for the next generation, and for the future of this state.

### About Owen McCarthy

Owen McCarthy is a proud native of Patten, Maine, a town of fewer than 1,000 people in the shadow of Mount Katahdin. He grew up in a trailer on his grandfather's land, the son of a third-generation logger and a second-generation school lunch lady. From an early age, Owen learned the value of hard work, responsibility, and community. He never felt defined by what he lacked, only by what was possible, shaped by a loving family, strong public schools, and an early education in discipline and perseverance.

Owen was the first in his family to attend college, earning an engineering degree from the University of Maine on a Pulp and Paper Scholarship. Drawn to solving real problems, he began his career working directly with Maine's paper mills, visiting nearly every mill in the state. He later earned an MBA from Harvard Business School, where he strengthened his ability to build organizations, manage complexity, and turn ideas into execution.

At his core, Owen is an engineer and an entrepreneur. He approaches challenges by thinking outside the box, asking hard questions, and focusing on practical solutions. He co-founded MedRhythms, a company that uses neuroscience and technology to help people regain mobility after stroke and Parkinson's disease. Originally launched outside Maine, Owen made the decision to move the company home, proving that world-class innovation can thrive here. Under his leadership, MedRhythms raised more than \$60 million, earned FDA clearance, completed clinical trials, and created high-paying jobs in Maine, all while improving lives across the country.

Owen's leadership extends beyond business. He has served as a Trustee of the University of Maine System, helping oversee a network of public universities that educate tens of thousands of students and serve as one of the state's most important economic engines. In that role, he has focused on accountability, workforce alignment, innovation, and ensuring public institutions deliver real value for Maine people.

Owen is a husband and the father of two young sons, Oliver and Theo. He and his wife, Holly, live in Gorham and spend summers on Porter Lake. He enjoys playing basketball and following Maine high school basketball, a passion that keeps him closely connected to communities across the state.



Owen is running for governor because he believes Maine's best days can still be ahead, but only if we are willing to lead differently. He is not running for the title. He is running to bring a problem-solver's mindset to state government, to challenge the status quo, and to build a Maine defined by opportunity for the next generation, affordability for working families, and the discipline to make government work as hard as the people it serves.

*Dirigo means "I lead." Owen McCarthy is ready to lead Maine forward.*

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- ii <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/07/10/top-states-for-business-americas-2025-the-full-rankings.html>
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