



Testimony
of
Mark Delisle
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Committee on Small Business
Subcommittee on Underserved, Agricultural
and Rural Business Development
US House of Representatives

“SBA District Office Collaboration with Resource Partners”

Chairman Golden, Ranking Member Tenney, Members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify.

My name is Mark Delisle and I am the state director of the Maine Small Business Development Centers (SBDC). The SBDC is a nationwide network that helps build and strengthen small businesses through no-cost, confidential business advising, training and educational resources. A program of the Small Business Administration (SBA), we have served small businesses in Maine for over forty years. The impact of our program in Maine is substantial. In 2021 alone, we helped 2,953 entrepreneurs to start 136 new businesses, create and save 917 jobs, and helped entrepreneurs access \$48.8 million in capital.

We could not have this level of success without the support of our partners at the SBA's Maine District Office. District Director Diane Sturgeon and her team work tirelessly to support resource partners and the small businesses of Maine. Among many things, our work together includes:

- **Meetings** – The Maine District Office holds regular SBA resource partner meetings. These meetings gather SBA-funded programs such as SBDC, SCORE, and the Women's Business Centers (WBC) to discuss strategy, performance, and collaboration. The meetings serve as an accessible and easy way to have open communication among the group. The Maine District Office also coordinates a broader meeting which includes many other economic development partners across the state. These meetings help strengthen relationships and enhance communication to keep everyone aligned and working together for the small businesses of Maine.
- **Cohosted educational events for small businesses** – The SBA District Office and Maine SBDC regularly work together to host events and training for small businesses in Maine. In May 2022, our teams worked together to celebrate National Trade Month and Export Week with a four-part series for small businesses interested in exporting. The training provided guidance on everything from writing an export business plan to obtaining financing for an export venture. The SBA and SBDC also regularly partner to host sessions that discuss resources available to entrepreneurs and the basics of

starting a business. Working together for events like these enables us to connect with more entrepreneurs to make them aware of the wide array of services available to them.

- **Promotional opportunities that highlight small business successes** – Maine SBDC and the Maine District Office regularly visit local businesses who have used our services to highlight the successes of these small businesses. For example, each year in promotion of Small Business Saturday we plan a media event that tours downtown businesses that have connected to our programs. This provides an excellent opportunity to promote the great work the SBDC and SBA do, but also to highlight the success of clients who have worked with the SBDC. This promotion also helps generate attention to Small Business Saturday. Similar visits to businesses happen periodically throughout the year where there is the opportunity, and during Small Business Week in May.
- **Program oversight** – The Maine District Office provides guidance and oversight on the SBDC program. The Project Officer reviews the program yearly to ensure compliance. The District Office also conducts a review of annual program proposals.

Our work together is mutually beneficial and helps to increase awareness of the critical services we provide to Maine's small businesses. The advocacy of our District Office enables more entrepreneurs to access the SBDC services they need to start, grow, or sustain their business. They rely on and trust resource partners to be their feet on the ground, doing the field work to deliver detailed, one-on-one guidance to small businesses. This allows the District Office to serve as educators, connectors, and advocators for the variety of programs and services the SBA provides.

That concludes my testimony. I look forward to any questions you might have.