



The Build HOPE Project

“The HOPE Program played a significant part in easing some of the stressors while I was completing my bachelor’s degree. This allowed me to graduate in the top of my class, while earning two university awards and still being able to focus on my children. From my experience with the HOPE Program, I have realized that perseverance and guidance can get you anywhere in life. I also experienced some gaps in support while in HOPE that this new Build HOPE Fund could help address. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for the HOPE Program and its participants.”

-Hilary Moore, HOPE participant and college grad.

The Build HOPE Project will help lift families out of poverty and will address Maine’s workforce shortage by strengthening the HOPE program.

- The Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment (HOPE) program is a higher education and training program for low-income parents with children. HOPE was enacted by the Maine legislature in 2018 as part of the bipartisan LIFT 2.0 legislation.
- Parents want to provide the best lives possible for their kids, but too many don't have jobs with stable hours that pay enough to afford basic necessities like housing, heat and food. Post-secondary education for parents is one of the most effective routes out of poverty. Higher levels of education increase the likelihood of having a job, earning more, having health insurance, owning a home, and a host of other positive outcomes.
- HOPE provides low-income parents with support for childcare, transportation, and other costs making it possible for them to succeed in higher education and training.
- As more parents and caregivers succeed in HOPE, they can join high-demand fields gaining good-paying, secure jobs. This works to

address Maine's workforce shortage. This project will work to strengthen Maine's health care workforce, as two primary areas of focus for HOPE participants are in the behavioral health field and nursing.

The Build HOPE Fund will build on the promise of the HOPE program by filling in any gaps in support in the program. The Fund will provide critical financial support to cover unmet needs. (The Fund will also be available to parents participating in the Parents as Scholars (PaS) program.)

- Even with the critical support provided through the HOPE program, many HOPE students still struggle to make ends meet on things like school supplies, car-related costs, home utilities, and internet.
- In a recent survey from the Department of Health and Human Services of HOPE students, 83% of respondents said they have difficulty making ends meet at the end of each month even with the support provided by HOPE.
- 59% of them are just \$100-300 dollars short of what they need to make ends meet on their family budget.

The Build HOPE fund, coupled with one-on-one support from HOPE navigators and Maine Equal Justice legal services team, will work to fill in current gaps in program support for students and to connect students with other available resources and supports, to help them graduate and meet their goals.

The Build HOPE project will also provide policymakers with reliable evidence that can inform long-term policy improvements to increase economic opportunities for families. Data from HOPE participants who access the Fund will be collected by MEJ for compilation and analysis.

While the Build HOPE project will work to ease hardship and increase opportunity for families today, it will also assist in building a deeper collective understanding of how to improve programs into the future so as to lift families with children out of poverty and strengthen Maine's workforce.