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THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

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Testimony of Senator Teresa S. Pierce introducing
**LD 416, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for Research and
Development and Commercialization**
before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
April 24, 2023

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and Honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Teresa Pierce, and I represent Senate District 25, which includes Falmouth, Cumberland, North Yarmouth, Yarmouth (majority), Gray, and Long Island. Today, I am pleased to introduce LD 416, “An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for Research and Development and Commercialization.”

Our state is at an inflection point. If we are to remain competitive in a rapidly growing economy, the time to invest in and expand our industries is now. This bill would allocate funds in support of technological innovation leading to the commercialization in the targeted sectors of life sciences and biomedical technology, environmental and renewable energy technology, information technology, advanced technologies for forestry and agriculture, aquaculture and marine technology, composites and advanced materials and precision manufacturing.

The investments would be prioritized and targeted through a competitive process and allow Maine-based public and private institutions to leverage matching private and federal funds on at least a one-to-one basis. Distribution of funds would follow the recommendations of the Maine Innovation Economy Advisory Board’s most recent innovation economy action plan, and the Department of Economic and Community Development’s most recent science and technology action plan.

Our last R&D bond passed in 2017 with overwhelming bipartisan support. According to an independent economic analysis, our \$45 million dollar investment generated more than 5,350 jobs, and \$1.4 billion in economic impact for the State of Maine, reaching every corner of the state.^[1] The result of that initial investment is economic growth equivalent to more than 31 times the original state expenditure.

^[1] <https://www.mainetechnology.org/mti-impact/mtaf2-0/>

Today, Maine's flagship public University is an R1 Research Institute, competing with the top research schools in the northeast. Jackson Labs continues to put Maine on the international map by empowering the global biomedical community. Abbott Labs was instrumental in producing COVID-19 tests that were distributed across America. Targeted investments work. With a 6:1 return on investment, and opening the door to federal and private matching, this is smart and necessary legislation. There's an upward trend of Maine's brightest leaders leaving for greater opportunities and higher pay out of state. This bill would play a big role in preventing this phenomenon known as brain drain. Let's keep Maine kids in Maine.

I want to thank Senator Mark Lawrence and Senator Rick Bennett for their leadership on previous R&D bond bills. Senator Lawrence initiated the R&D bond bills back in 1997 and set up a Joint Select Committee on Research and Development, which Senator Bennett co-chaired. Through this outstanding work and forethought 25 years ago, Maine has benefited every day since.

Today, we have an opportunity to bring both chambers together, show our unwavering support by investing in Maine people and Maine industries. Let's get this through the Legislature, to the Governor's desk, and out to the Maine people for a vote. This is an investment in our communities, from Presque Isle to Portland, and I urge this committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 416.

Thank you for allowing me to present this important bill to you today. I am happy to answer any questions to the best of my ability.