

The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Janeé Pelletier, Executive Vice President, Communications & Government
Affairs, Learning Undeclared

In Support Of

L.D. 1389
An Act to Establish a Mobile Learning Lab

11 April 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, thank you for having me today. My name is Janeé Pelletier and I work for a nonprofit organization called Learning Undeclared. Today I am here to support L.D. 1389, An Act to Establish a Mobile Learning Lab.

[Learning Undeclared](#) was founded 20 years ago to nurture students' interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects and careers. We currently own and operate a fleet of seven mobile laboratories, serving 250,000 K-12 students per year. Our curriculum showcases a wide variety of topics ranging from biology to artificial intelligence.

In the last twenty school years, we have seen great success by serving students with a laboratory that comes right to their school parking lot. Among our success are:

- A 400% increase in knowledge of biotechnology jobs
- A 67% increase in content knowledge related to scientific data and measurement
- And 62% of students reported an increased desire to finish high school

I am confident that a Mobile Learning Lab for Maine students can also move the needle in this way. But beyond just this expertise in mobile laboratories, I have a very personal interest in the Mobile Learning Lab project.

Growing up in Bangor and spending 12 years in the Bangor school system, I had truly amazing teachers. What I did not have, however, was access to cutting-edge scientific tools or techniques, the kind that would have excited me about doing science for a living. Having gathered knowledge of careers simply by observation, I also had a limited view of the types of jobs available to me in Maine. Like many students in rural and northern areas, I believed that I had to leave the state if I wanted a high-paying job in a STEM field.

A mobile learning laboratory program for Maine would completely change the way that students like me feel about Maine careers. The mobile lab breaks down so many barriers for students in underserved and rural areas, allowing students experiences far beyond what many schools can provide.

The program would build students' *STEM identity*, the positive feeling that they are good at science and that there are opportunities for them in the fields Maine needs to grow our economy. Engaging students in life sciences and engineering fields early will help prepare more learners to enter these important high-demand fields down the road.

We have a rich backbone of both heritage industries, like forestry, natural resources management, and environmental science, and new growth areas such as life sciences and biotechnology. All of these companies need strong, bright workers dedicated to studying and working in Maine. This starts with investing in the K-12 system. This innovative program will leverage the strengths of Maine's life sciences organizations and help Maine students learn about on-ramps to meaningful careers right here at home.

On behalf of Learning Undefeated, I am honored to support the Mobile Learning Laboratory program. For all the students of Maine, I urge you to support L.D. 1389.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Very sincerely yours,

Janeé Pelletier
Executive Vice President, Communications & Government Affairs
Learning Undefeated