



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
323 State Street, Augusta, ME 04330-7131
(207) 629-4000 | Fax (207) 629-4048 | mccs.me.edu

TO: Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
FROM: Dr. Janet Sortor, Vice President and Chief Academic Officer
RE: Testimony in support of LD 1389
DATE: April 10, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Janet Sortor, the Vice President and Chief Academic Officer for the Maine Community College System, and I am providing testimony in support of LD1389 on behalf of the Maine Community College System.

Maine has a lot of good jobs in STEM. Educate Maine (EM) has been central to broadening STEM awareness and interest in the K-12 schools across the state, planting the seeds of a future STEM workforce. Project Login focused on the *T*—technology. It connects parents, students, teachers, higher education institutions, and businesses with the central purpose of raising awareness of computer science and information technology and creating educational opportunities. Educate Maine and the Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance (MMSA) partnered to expand access to computer science in K-12 schools by providing teachers with foundational knowledge, curricula, and training in computer science. Ongoing professional development and an active educator community provide support to keep this grass-roots effort growing. EM strengthened this with complementary educational opportunities for students by partnering with schools to offer after-school Coding clubs, summer immersion programs, and connections to college programs.

The Mobil Learning Lab is the next step in expanding STEM awareness, interest, and opportunity for students in Maine, this time in the *S*—Science. This mobile, state-of-the-art life sciences lab will bring hands-on learning in science to students across Maine, particularly in underserved and rural schools that might not otherwise have access to cutting edge, hands-on science and the resources needed to provide it. Science is fun; every student in Maine should have the opportunity to experience that and have access to educational pathways and careers that high-quality science learning provides. This funding, which provides two-years of support and aligns with a complementary CDS request, will allow the mobile learning lab to begin with middle school students and then transition to high school students in year two. It will provide students with the opportunity to gain an academic foundation in the life sciences and to also develop and nurture an interest while in secondary school that will hopefully lead them to post-secondary education in science at Maine's community colleges and universities. Science, technology, and healthcare are three areas with acute workforce needs in Maine. Growing the pipeline of Maine students pursuing academic and career opportunities in these high-growth fields is of critical importance for Maine's future economic success.

The Mobile Learning Lab will provide life sciences education and programming to students across Maine, expand access and interest in science, and the opportunity to grow an academic community of support in a vital field—science clubs, summer programs, and connections to college programs. We look forward to partnering with Educate Maine on this project.

Thank you.