

The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Melissa Maginnis, Associate Professor of Microbiology, The University of
Maine

In Support Of

L.D. 1389

An Act to Provide Support for the Maine Discovery Museum's Informal Science, Technology,
Engineering and Mathematics Education Programs Throughout the State

21 April 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Melisa Maginnis, Associate Professor at The University of Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of L.D. 871, An Act to Provide Support for Maine Discovery Museum's Informal Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education Throughout the State.

General background:

The University of Maine is committed to supporting the state in efforts of education, research, and service.

Science education at the K-12 level is lacking in the state of Maine, and students need early and consistent exposure to the sciences in order to build awareness and confidence in order to pursue the sciences at the educational and career level. Without early and consistent exposure, students' interests in pursuing science-related careers in health care, science, technology, and mathematics will have an impact on the state workforce, biomedical infrastructure, and the economy. The biomedical and health sciences sector is the largest and fast-growing sector in the state, and thus the state must invest in the future of our workforce to build opportunities within the state for our residents.

Implementing these programs will build a foundation for continued growth of science education programs in the state of Maine. The Maine Science Festival has been a huge success in the state, serving ~10,000 each year since 2015. I have been honored to be associated with the Maine Science Festival, as a speaker, as an attendee with my own children, and as an advocate spreading the word to my UMaine students. The central location in Maine of the Maine Discovery Museum and the Maine Science Festival provides access to students in rural parts of the state that may not otherwise have exposure to careers in the sciences and also supports those in the local areas seeking science enrichment. Supporting science education is critical also for a knowledgeable, informed community members to make important decisions regarding public

health and safety, as highlighted by the recent COVID-19 pandemic and other public health threat such as PFAS in the environment.

I provide my utmost support for this bill, and I hope you will give it your full consideration.

With gratitude,

Melissa Maginnis

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