Bioscience Association of Maine

The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Billie Cary, Education Programs Manager, BioME

In Support Of

LD 871:
An Act to Provide Support for Maine Discovery Museum's Informal Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education Throughout the State

24 April 2023

Chair Rafferty, Chair Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Billie Cary, I am the Education Programs Manager at the Bioscience Association of Maine (BioME) and a resident of Cape Elizabeth. I am here today to present testimony on behalf of BioME in support of LD 871.

Bioscience Association of Maine (BioME) is a trade organization representing over 230 bioscience companies in Maine. BioME's mission is to advance economic growth and opportunities within the life sciences community in Maine by allocation equal involvement in the life sciences advocacy, education, economic development, workforce development, and attracting out-of-business.

Life sciences is one of the fastest growing industries in Maine. There are over 480 bioscience establishments currently employing 9,500 professionals in the state. The average salary for a life science employee in Maine is $108,000 which is much higher than all other industries. Moreover, life science jobs in Maine have been growing faster than in all other New England states. In the past 5 years alone, the high paying bioscience jobs have grown by 42% (compared to 5% job growth for all other industries).

With such substantial growth, the Maine life science industry needs workforce for all sorts of positions, from manufacturing jobs to post-doc scientists. Maine has a unique opportunity to become a thriving biotech hub but what the industry currently lacks is appropriate career pathways for Maine students, especially in rural areas.

As the only life science industry group in the State, BioME works closely with its members and the number one issue for bioscience companies in Maine is difficulty with recruiting skilled professionals. The industry needs employees at all levels – from non-degree holders, through lab technicians to bioengineers and highly specialized scientists.

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We believe that technically proficient talent starts with investing in students. With 95% of the population learning about science outside of the classroom
(Falk, J. H., & Dierking, L. D., 2010, American Scientist, vol. 98) through informal learning settings such as museums, science centers, and programs like those provided by Maine Discovery Museum, these resources are key to promoting sciences and thus inspiring future careers in our state. As the hub of informal STEM education in the state, Maine Discovery Museum reaches rural and underserved communities all year long. They provide rich science content that students cannot get anywhere else in Maine.

As more than half a child's waking hours are spent outside of formal school environments (National Science Teacher Association; Learning Science in Informal Environments, 2012), informal education like that provided by Maine Discovery Museum is vital for kids' education and for the future workforce of Maine.

Maine Discovery Museum, Maine Invention Convention, and the Maine Science Festival reach approximately 75,000 people per year- exposing these Mainers to science and inspiring the next generation of Maine's life science workforce.

For those reasons, we urge you to support LD 871. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Billie Cary
Education Programs Manager
Bioscience Association of Maine (BioME)