

Testimony from the University of New England before the Committee on Housing and Economic Development

LD 788 An Act to Promote an Innovation-Driven Economy by Increasing Research and Development Spending

March 11, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Ed Cervone and I am the Director of Partnerships and External Relations at the University of New England (UNE). I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of UNE in support of LD 788.

Research is central to UNE's mission. UNE is a designated R2 doctoral university with high research activity (Carnegie Classification). In 2024, thirty-five UNE research projects were awarded over \$18 million. Much of that research happens in the life science and biomedicine space, addressing topics like chronic disease, pain, and aging. Research is also a big part of the student experience. Almost half of all undergraduates actively work with faculty on research projects.

UNE is proud to be a member of Maine's research community and works with industry, nonprofit, and other academic partners to advance R&D as a means of economic and workforce growth. The proposal to adopt the Maine Economic Growth Council's benchmark for R&D spending as the State goal is a wonderful idea. First, it is a simple task. This information is already gathered annually and reported to the public. The Growth Council is a nonpartisan, public-private partnership, widely known and trusted around Maine. Second, it sends the right message to the market. It says that the State (industry, government, academia, and nonprofit) is committed to advancing this investment goal and that all stakeholders are on the same page. It sends a message to researchers, companies, and investors that Maine is a good place to do R&D. It moves Maine from having an R&D spending goal of "more" to a measurable and attainable goal.

There is precedent for this. The MaineSpark workforce coalition successfully lobbied the Legislature to adopt an education attainment goal of 60% by 2025. This meant that 60% of Maine adults would earn a credential of value (degree, certification, license, trade, etc.) by 2025. This small, but meaningful gesture, led to public and private entities working toward a common goal. This goal was adopted into the State's 10-year economic plan. This goal guided investment and activity. And it looks like Maine will either meet or very nearly meet this goal once the 2025 data is available. None of this would have happened without that first move from the Legislature, adopting a community goal as the State's goal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ed Cervone
Director, Partnerships and External Relations

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University of New England
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