

Testimony in Support of LD 361 “An Act to Support the Francis Malcolm Science Center”

Presented to Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

March 25, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

My name is Laurie Spooner, and I am a science teacher at Van Buren District School and a resident of New Sweden. I am here today to express my strong support for funding the Francis Malcolm Science Center (FMSC) in Easton, Maine. As a teacher, I have had the privilege of bringing students of all ages—K-12—to this remarkable facility for planetarium shows and collaborative environmental projects.

The FMSC is a vital educational resource for our rural communities. It provides students with hands-on, immersive science experiences that are otherwise difficult to access. Whether exploring the wonders of space in the planetarium or engaging in environmental fieldwork, students gain invaluable learning opportunities that spark curiosity and foster a deeper understanding of science.

Beyond its impact on students, the FMSC plays a crucial role in supporting teachers. The all-volunteer staff has been actively involved in our Aroostook County science teacher network, offering professional development and resources that enhance science education throughout the region. Their dedication has helped many educators bring innovative and engaging lessons into their classrooms.

I have personally experienced the impact of their work. In preparation for the recent total solar eclipse, I attended a training at FMSC that gave me the knowledge and resources to guide my students through this once-in-a-lifetime event. Every student in my school—over 250 students—participated in an activity in their classrooms that we learned at the FMSC workshop. A single training session at FMSC turned into a school-wide educational experience, ensuring that every student had a meaningful connection to this extraordinary astronomical event.

Funding the FMSC is an investment in the future of Maine’s students and educators. It ensures that hands-on, inquiry-based science education remains accessible to all, regardless of location or financial barriers. I urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” to sustain and expand the critical programs the FMSC provides.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Laurie Spooner