



JAMES F. DOUGHTY SCHOOL

143 Fifth Street – Bangor, Maine 04401 (207) 941-6220

Samual W. Moring, Principal
Darryl Loring, Assistant Principal/Athletic Director
Kathleen Reardon, Guidance Counselor

April 3, 2025

The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Testimony from **Tracy Vassiliev, Middle School Science Teacher, James F. Doughty School**

In Support of

L.D. 281

An Act to Provide Support for Certain **Maine Discovery Museum Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Educational Programming** Throughout the State

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am Tracy Vassiliev, an eighth-grade science teacher at the James F. Doughty School in Bangor. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in strong support of L.D. 281, which would provide essential support for STEM educational programming offered by the Maine Discovery Museum.

As an educator, I witness firsthand the transformative power of hands-on STEM experiences in inspiring students and shaping their futures. The Bangor School Department is committed to academic excellence, and a key part of that mission is exposing students to diverse scientific fields and real-world research. The Maine Discovery Museum plays a crucial role in making this possible.

Through its Maine Science Festival program, the Museum provides unparalleled opportunities that enrich student learning. Programs like Teen Tech Night, 5-Minute Genius, the State finals of Maine Invention Convention, and the Maine Science Festival Field Trip expose students to innovative ideas and real-world STEM applications.

For example, the Invention Convention challenges students to identify real-world problems, develop inventive solutions, and bring their ideas to life—an authentic experience that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The Maine Discovery Museum supports students every step of the way, offering guidance and resources that enable them to compete at the state and even national levels. This year, three James F. Doughty School students will proudly represent Maine at the National Invention Convention in June—an achievement made possible through this invaluable support.

Similarly, the 5-Minute Genius event sparks curiosity by introducing students to cutting-edge research, inspiring many to pursue independent projects for the Maine Middle School State STEM Fair. The Maine Science Festival Field Trips further enrich their experience by providing direct access to experts from STEM organizations, encouraging students to explore emerging fields beyond their regular curriculum. This year alone, our students engaged in quantum particle experiments and biometric data



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collection—experiences that would be nearly impossible in a traditional classroom setting. These opportunities are essential to keeping students engaged and curious about STEM.

The work of the Maine Discovery Museum is vital—not just to teachers and students but to the future of STEM education in our state. By supporting L.D. 281, you are investing in meaningful, high-impact experiences that inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, and innovators. I urge you to support this bill and ensure that these invaluable programs continue to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tracy Vassiliev
Grade 8 Science Teacher
James F. Doughty School
Bangor, ME 04401
(207) 941-6220
tvassiliev@bangorschools.net