



The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Angela Oechsle, Project>Login Program Director,
Educate Maine

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.”

Thursday, April 10, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Angela Oechsle, and I am the Project>Login Program Director at Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of L.D. 281. Educate Maine’s mission is to ensure that Maine people are prepared to succeed in education and career. We want all Maine people to reach their highest educational and economic potential to power a vibrant, globally competitive Maine economy. Our Project>Login program strives to connect students and adult learners with an interest in computer science or technology to education, training, and employment opportunities. We recognize the importance of STEM education in deeply engaging students at every stage of the education pipeline, teaching them highly sought-after 21st-century skills, and opening doors to exciting, high-wage, in-demand careers. We are long-time champions of Maine Discovery Museum programs.

STEM education represents great potential for supporting economic growth in our state. Over 278,500 Mainers work in science, technology, engineering, medicine, and math-related careers, far exceeding the demand rate for most other professions. STEM is directly responsible for over 36 percent of Maine’s GDP. The Bureau of Labor Statistics also forecasts an 11 percent growth in high-skilled STEM careers in the next 12-15 years in the manufacturing, healthcare, and defense sectors. The number of STEM jobs is growing twice as fast as non-STEM careers, with a projected 11,278,700 positions available in 2030. In short, investing in STEM education now will secure a brighter and more prosperous future for Maine’s workforce and economy.

We will not achieve full opportunity for our students in this field nor our future economy without multiple, equitable pathways to access informal STEM education opportunities, especially in our rural, underserved communities, and our educators supporting these student-led projects also need access to high-quality professional development opportunities.

We have partnered with the Maine Discovery Museum and the Maine Science Festival team for years and have witnessed first-hand their approach and expertise in expanding STEM education. Not only are they committed to reaching Mainers across the state, but they are also persistent in ensuring that our rural areas have the same access to informal STEM education as our larger towns and cities. They are reaching many learners and families through the Maine Science Festival and bringing thousands to Bangor, ME, annually. They are filling gaps in elementary science education PD through their Science

Teacher Academy and consistently delivering high-quality STEM education programs locally to meet the needs of our young learners.

Successful STEM education for our young Mainers starts early and informally and continues through partnerships and collaborations with K12 schools, higher education institutions, other nonprofits, STEM associations, businesses, and other community-based organizations. Maine Discovery Museum's statewide programs will continue to help Educate Maine through expanded education, outreach, and awareness. MDM is the partner to lead and continue this effort by engaging all stakeholders in this important work. I urge you to support this bill.

Respectfully,

Angela Oechsle
Educate Maine