



**TESTIMONY OF BRIAN WHITNEY, PRESIDENT OF THE MAINE TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE,
REGARDING LD 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 esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs, my name is Brian Whitney, and I am the President of the Maine Technology Institute, our state-funded, public-private partnership that helps catalyze innovation in Maine. While I am unable to appear in person today, I want to add my voice to those who are testifying in support of Senator Baldacci's bill, LD 281, "An Act to Provide Support for Certain Maine Discovery Museum Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Educational Programming Throughout the State."

The bill's purpose is an important one, it seeks to provide modest but meaningful ongoing funding to the Maine Discovery Museum to support its foundational programs to cultivate interest in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM). Specifically, this funding will help ensure the continuation of such vital programs as the Maine Science Festival, the Maine Invention Convention, and the Science Around Maine program. It is especially crucial given our state's need to attract 75,000 people to our talent pool just to keep pace with our labor force challenges. Exposing students to the opportunities available in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math is vital to building a future talent pipeline for employers.

The Maine Discovery Museum in Bangor, led by the inspiring and indefatigable Kate Dickerson, "fosters a culture of curiosity and exploration." Their amazing programs help build the aspirations of Maine's future scientists and innovators. One of the key pillars of the Museum's programming is the annual five-day Maine Science Festival. Occurring in March each year, the Maine Science Festival just celebrated its 10th year, attracting people of all ages to Bangor to showcase the extraordinary science and technology efforts of Maine's entrepreneurs and innovators.

The Maine Technology Institute has been proud to sponsor the Maine Science Festival over the past decade and, specifically, serving as the presenting sponsor of the festival's "5 Minute Genius" panel. The *5 Minute Genius* program presents leading Maine scientists and entrepreneurs who share extraordinary rapid-fire stories about their scientific journeys and discoveries. It is a stirring experience for all in attendance and hopefully motivates our aspiring young innovators to chart their own creative paths.

Again, I am pleased to offer my support for this meaningful measure. Thank you for your time and consideration.