

**Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**

**Testimony of Valerie Young, Chief of Staff, Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences**

**In Support of LD 281, An Act to Provide Support for Certain Maine Discovery Museum Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Educational Programming Throughout the State  
April 10, 2025**

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

My name is Valerie Young, and I am proud to represent Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in East Boothbay, an independent, nonprofit research institute that conducts leading-edge ocean science to understand the marine world and to promote sustainability and resilience through research, education, and innovation. As a science-driven institution, we understand firsthand the power of STEM education in preparing students and communities for a rapidly evolving world and economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 281.

Bigelow Laboratory has been a proud and active participant in the **Maine Science Festival**, an initiative of the Maine Discovery Museum. Our scientists have presented research and led hands-on demonstrations to spark curiosity and engagement among learners of all ages. These experiences bridge the gap between laboratory science and everyday life, fostering public understanding of science and inspiring the next generation of innovators.

LD 281 recognizes the vital need to expand access to high-quality STEM educational programming throughout Maine. This support is especially critical for rural communities, where opportunities for hands-on science experiences may be limited. Without sustained investment, we risk leaving behind students who might otherwise discover their passion and potential in STEM fields. By supporting the Maine Discovery Museum's statewide programming, LD 281 will help ensure that every child—regardless of zip code—has access to science learning that is engaging, empowering, and transformative. This directly aligns with Bigelow Laboratory's commitment to expanding science literacy and opportunity in Maine.

If implemented, this bill will create a stronger, more scientifically literate Maine. We will see increased engagement from students in science and technology, better preparation for future careers, and a more resilient, knowledge-based economy.



Bigelow Laboratory urges you to support LD 281, not only as an investment in Maine's youth and future workforce, but as a vital step in supporting organizations like ours that benefit from a more informed, inspired, and engaged public.

Thank you for your time and your service to Maine.

Sincerely,  
Valerie Young, Chief of Staff  
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences

