

# Dexter Regional High School

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The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
Testimony from Alyson Saunders, Classroom STEM Educator, Dexter Regional High 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  
10 April 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Alyson Saunders, I have been a classroom STEM educator at Dexter Regional High School for more than 17 years. Thank you for the opportunity to testify 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

Maine is a geographically expansive state with many populations more than an hour from the nearest city. Transportation is a perpetual problem in school districts and this limitation means that students do not always have easy access to extracurricular activities. This limitation extends to STEM opportunities as well.

While teachers in the classroom work diligently to provide the best opportunities for their students, as their budget and expertise will allow, having access to programing and people that can support their student's learning beyond the classroom is more than welcome. Every experience and advantage we can provide our students to explore the worlds of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics is a valuable investment in our own future. The opportunity for STEM career exploration, hands-on STEM play, and celebration of Maine's incredible STEM research is something that is exceptionally important to grow the Maine STEM workforce.

Agriculture, aquaculture, engineering (civil, mechanical, environmental, biomedical, etc.), medicine, genetics, biotechnology, computer science, cyber security,

transportation, environmental science, among other STEM related fields are all jobs that will need filling as our current workforce ages. We need to be proactive about exposing students to these types of careers and more, every chance we get.

By supporting programs like the Maine Science Festival, Maine Invention Convention, and Science Around ME, urban and rural schools will have much easier access to programming and experiences that will strengthen our student's growth in STEM beyond the classroom. This engagement can spark careers and build understanding of how our world works. Ensuring continued access to these programs through dedicated funding will benefit thousands of students across the state.

Through programs like these, my own students over the years have had opportunities to meet and interact with STEM professionals, to engage with other STEM interested peers, and have been exposed to the myriad STEM research that is being conducted around our amazing state. Their understanding and appreciation of the world around them has been enriched by these experiences. I am so thankful that these opportunities have been offered free of charge and close to home. I hope that others will see the value of this investment in our children's education and will fully support L.D. 281.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alyson Saunders".

Alyson Saunders

Biology/STEM Teacher

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