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I am saddened that I won't be able to testify in person today.

I am an alumni of the Messalonskee High School robotics team, 2648 Infinite Loop. I joined my sophomore year of high school and at the time I struggled greatly with both advanced math and science. Despite being challenged in both areas, I was welcomed to the team with open arms and immediately immersed in the world of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. My peers took the time to show me how things like programming, engineering, planning all took place and I learned far more than I would have been capable outside of joining the team. By being able to learn not only from teachers in school, but from my peers in a collaborative and enriching environment I thrived. I was later inspired to join the math team, and as I moved on to college I even took classes in computer sciences despite my major being English/Writing. My horizons were greatly expanded, and my life forever impacted by being a member of a FIRST robotics team. The leadership, Jamie Luce, and all of the parents who volunteered their time created a safe and fun educational environment where I was able to vastly expand my horizons and boost my academic performance in multiple areas. The impact that these teams have cannot be understated; they help students connect and form friendships with others they might never have crossed paths with; they offer incredible scholarship and continuing education opportunities, and allow for life-long learning, even after graduation through volunteer opportunities and coaching. Our tiny team from Central Maine was able to qualify for Worlds twice during my time with 2648, which gave me opportunities to travel, meet students from other schools across the country and beyond; Robotics programs inspire, educate, support, and build life-long networks for those who have access to them. They deserve every ounce of support that can be offered.