

To: Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
From: Mason Labonte
Date: May 2, 2025
Re: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF LD 1740

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Mason Labonte, and I am a student at Spruce Mountain High School and the Foster Career and Technical Education Center. I am writing to support LD 1740, An Act to Establish the Maine Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics Matching Grant Program. I helped advocate for this bill because I've seen firsthand how programs like this can change students' lives, mine included.

I spent three years in FIRST® LEGO® League and three more in FIRST® Robotics, where I learned bookkeeping, public speaking, fundraising, and teamwork. Robotics led me to the Business Academy at the Foster Career and Technical Education Center, where I'm studying personal finance, marketing, accounting, and computer applications skills, preparing me for the workforce and a future in business administration.

I've also been heavily involved in the arts. After starting as a sound technician, I've been the stage manager for our drama team's musicals and one-act plays for the past two years. Theater, like robotics, taught me leadership, organization, and teamwork.

Since my freshman year, I've judged at our state FIRST® LEGO® League competitions because I care about supporting younger students' hands-on learning journeys.

I've been lucky to have access to these opportunities, but I know many students across Maine don't. These kinds of programs are expensive, and too many schools can't offer them. That's why LD 1740 is so important. It would help make sure more students no matter where they live or what their school budget looks like can have the same chances I've had.

Even though I'm still in high school, I think a lot about these programs continuing after me. I plan to spend time in the workforce after graduation, but my goal is to become a teacher and to run programs like these for future students. I want to make sure others have access to the same life-changing opportunities I've had.

LD 1740 supports programs that helped build me into the student, leader, and future professional I am today. Please support this bill. It matters, I'm living proof of what it can do.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mason Labonte".

Mason Labonte

