

Sam Bullard
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LD 1740

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Sam Bullard and I am writing to support An Act to Establish the STEAM Matching Grant Program. I am a Tattoo Apprentice at Timber Hearth Tattoo Company in Bangor, an alumni from UMaine, a mentor for high school Robotics Team 2648 - Infinite Loop Robotics based in Oakland, and a resident of Pittsfield.

Growing up I had a deep love for both the arts and mathematics. I spent most of my high school years after school floating between various extracurriculars and the art room, eagerly seeking opportunities to be engaged in my community and pursuing my interests. Unfortunately I came from a smaller Maine school district, and there wasn't much diversity of programs for kids to explore their passion for STEAM beyond basic mathlete teams and band class. I can only imagine how much further I could have grown my skills if our state had given more funding to STEAM programs.

Through meeting other like minded STEAM folks, I have found myself as an adult volunteering for Infinite Loop Robotics. It has been transformative getting to see the incredible things these students get to accomplish through their program. Their application of scientific, mathematical, and creative thinking is evident everywhere in their work, and it amazes me to see how robotics alone has given them such confidence and skill. Seeing their team makes me wish smaller districts like my alma mater had the support to do similar things.

I have a lot within the realm of STEAM to thank for where I am today. It led me to receive a Bachelor of Mathematics with a Studio Art minor at UMaine, which has helped me greatly through my career path. Even within my current tattooing pursuits, I still find myself applying the same skills I learned from STEAM related education. These lessons carry on with us not just for childhood, but all our lives. Everyone stands to benefit from further opportunities to explore these interests, both students and society alike. I implore you to support this bill.

Thank you.