

Jeff Bailey
Jay
LD 1740
May 4, 2025

Dear Education and Cultural Affairs Committee of the Maine State Legislature,

My name is Jeff Bailey, and I'm a resident of Jay. I am also a high school technology teacher in a neighboring school district in rural Maine. I am writing in support of the bill LD 1740 - An Act to Establish the Maine Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics Matching Grant Program.

If you all think back to some of the more formative experiences you had in your education, it likely isn't a test or an essay; it's those real-world experiences, competitions, performances, and field trips that helped light a passion to learn within us all. As a parent and a public educator, I know there are many challenges to giving students opportunities for education, enrichment, and employment skills. Any time students can pursue these opportunities beyond the classroom setting, we create important memories and real-world applications for their learning. That's why I write in support of this bill.

This bill would help to fund the registration fees for many events students can take part in, from competitive robotics events to theater competitions and more. I have served for many years now as a parent and adult mentor to a local robotics team that competes in the FIRST Robotics Competition league throughout the world. I have seen the students gain important employability skills like public speaking, leadership, written communication, financial management, and teamwork, as well as the STEM skills often associated with robotics. Employers, colleges, and schools all agree that these are all skills vital to the future workforce of Maine, and yet many of these opportunities are out of reach to the majority of our students. I only wish the school district I teach in had this opportunity, but financial barriers place these options beyond our ability to fund them.

I ask that you consider funding this bill to help financially support more schools and even homeschool students to be able to participate in these programs. These skills are vital to Maine's future and provide an opportunity for more students to participate, regardless of the financial barriers. Supporting this bill sends a message to businesses and employers that Maine values Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math as well as the Arts, areas where most small businesses and international employers alike need a skilled workforce. This bill is a rare opportunity to provide support for students, parents, and businesses.

Thank you,

Jeff Bailey
2014 Oxford County Teacher of the Year
Technology Teacher at Mountain Valley High School, Rumford, Maine