

Alison Bessette  
Robotics Institute of Maine  
LD 1740

Dear Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am writing to voice my strong support for LD 1740, “An Act to Establish the Maine Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics Matching Grant Program.” This legislation is especially important for supporting hands-on learning opportunities like robotics. Programs like these go far beyond extracurricular enrichment — they serve as launching pads for future careers and help students build essential, lifelong skills.

As a former participant in a school robotics program I can personally attest to the transformative impact these opportunities have on young minds. Robotics gave me my first hands-on experience with engineering concepts, teamwork, and problem-solving. It challenged me to think critically, adapt quickly, and collaborate effectively — all at a young age. Most importantly, it opened my eyes to career paths I never knew were possible. That experience ultimately led me to pursue a degree in engineering at the University of Maine, where I continued to build on the foundation robotics had given me. I can say without hesitation: I would not be an engineer today if it weren't for the robotics programs I had access to.

Now, as an avid volunteer in robotics programs across the state, I have the privilege of seeing firsthand how these initiatives continue to evolve and inspire. High school teams are building increasingly sophisticated machines, a testament to the growing technical skills students are acquiring. Younger students are jumping in earlier than ever, supported by mentors and educators who foster an environment of creativity, iteration, and innovation — all within the context of fun and competitive challenges. Funding for STEAM education, and robotics in particular, is not just an investment in education; it's an investment in Maine's future workforce, economy, and innovation potential. I urge you to continue supporting and expanding these programs so that more students across the state can discover their potential, just like I did.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Maine's youth.

Sincerely,

Alison Bessette  
Chair, Robotics Institute of Maine  
Robotics Alumni