

Emma Zimmerschied
Portland
LD 1740

My name is Finnegan Zimmerschied, (Legal Name Emma Zimmerschied). I am an alumni of the Maine FIRST robotics team Blue Crew robotics #6153, testifying in favor of the Act to Establish the Maine Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics Matching Grant Program.

Being the Safety Captain on the Blue Crew FIRST robotics team was an incredibly important and valuable 4 years of my life. During high school I was an incredibly anxious teen who had severe social anxiety with a very bad isolation problem, being the Safety Captain on the Blue Crew robotics team helped me gain almost a of the social skills I have today. As a part of my job as Safety Captain I had to talk to every other Safety Captain at Robotics competitions to vote for the Safest Safety Captains, this helped me greatly to get over some of my social anxiety and build social/ networking skills. I had to market myself and my team, present me and my teams safety plan, and have effective conversations. This was a perfect and safe place to work on communicating with others; everyone is extremely kind, we all are working towards the same goals, and I had a topic to fall back in case I couldn't think of anything to say or got too anxious to. Because of this experience I now have extremely minimal social anxiety and am skilled in talking to and connecting with all kinds of people.

This experience also gave me a lot of valuable technical skills which I now use in my everyday life. Being on the team and participating in meeting taught me how to engineer machines and how to engineer through problems, how to properly and safely use hand and power tools, and just in general how to keep a metal structure secure and safely function. These learning experience directly brought me to my current job. I currently work as a teacher's assistant for a metal art class and have FIRST robotics and my team to thank for it. These skills made me a an extremely qualified candidate for my position. Knowing how to engineer problems, how to safely use tools, and how to secure metal structures are things are now skills are things I teach my students how to do every day.

I adore my job and am currently going to college to become an Art Educator, but I would have never ended up here if I hadn't joined the Blue Crew. This being on that team has helped through my and finding my life's passion. These teams are incredibly important to the students on these teams, and through the teams people get the opportunity to learn skills they never would have access to learn and get opportunities to help the communities around them. A lot of these team have to scrap by on community funding and fundraising, like how it was when I was a part of it. If these teams can get more of the finical assistance they deserve, they can make an even bigger difference. If these teams have more money they won't have to do as much fundraising and can use that time and resources to put more energy into helping the community around them, they can get better and safer tools/ equipment, and they can spend more time teaching these kids skills they can bring with them throughout their whole life, giving them valuable experiences they could only get from being on these teams.

These teams and programs do so much for the students who are apart of them and for the communities around them. And if they can get this finical help they need and deserve they can make an even bigger difference, and help these students be even more successful.