Liam Wilmot
Hallowell, Maine
Testimony in Support of LD 1740

Hello, my name is Liam Wilmot, and I am a student member of FRC Team 4473, Delta Prime Robotics 4-H, based in Richmond, Maine. I am currently a high school junior and have been on the team for three years. Our team provides an educational and collaborative STEAM experience to students across the surrounding area, including Hallowell, Richmond, Durham, and Harpswell.

Throughout their education, students are offered opportunities to join athletic teams where they can learn teamwork and discipline. But for students who are passionate about STEAM, there are far fewer opportunities to engage in a team-oriented, hands-on environment. Joining my robotics team has truly changed my life.

Through robotics, I've learned not just about engineering and coding, but also about leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and perseverance. These aren't just academic skills—they're essential life tools. Programs like FIRST Robotics open doors for students who might not initially see themselves as engineers, scientists, or innovators, and they give us a space to explore our interests and develop real-world skills.

However, programs like these are expensive. They rely heavily on fundraising, volunteers, and strong community partnerships. Our team is a nonprofit and does not receive financial support from our local school districts. Each year, we work hard to raise funds by reaching out to local businesses and supporters. Despite our efforts, we still face ongoing challenges covering essential costs like robot parts, competition travel, and registration fees.

To stay within our budget, we limit our spending and reuse most of our parts year after year. We also prioritize sustainability by incorporating recycled Plexiglass and metal into our robots. Even with these cost-saving practices, the financial burden remains significant. For newer teams or those without strong community or financial support, these costs can be a major barrier to participation.

That's why LD 1740 is so important. By offering a matching grant to support programs like robotics, coding clubs, science fairs, and STEAM-focused arts initiatives, this bill will help ensure that more Maine students—regardless of their background or location—can access life-changing STEAM opportunities.

I hope you will support LD 1740. Every student deserves the chance to be part of a collaborative STEAM team, just like I have.

Sincerely,
Liam Wilmot