

Sabine Nielsen
Thorndike
LD 1740

Testimony in Support of An Act to Establish the Maine STEAM Matching Grant Program

Sabine Nielsen
Alumna, Team 2648 – Infinite Loop Robotics

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

My name is Sabine Nielsen, and I am an alumna of Team 2648 – Infinite Loop Robotics, a high school robotics team based in Oakland, Maine. Additionally, I currently serve as the computer science teacher at Belfast Area High School in Belfast, Maine. I write to you today to offer my strong support for An Act to Establish the Maine STEAM Matching Grant Program.

My involvement in STEAM education through competitive robotics profoundly impacted my life. In high school, I gained invaluable experience in design, fabrication, and programming as a member of the robotics team. Crucially, my two years as team captain allowed me to hone essential leadership, teamwork, and time management skills. I firmly believe that my participation in competitive robotics was instrumental in my acceptance to a top undergraduate engineering program. My participation in and passion for high-quality STEM education ultimately led me to pursue a career in education.

Regrettably, not all schools and communities possess the necessary resources – tools, mentors, and funding – to establish competitive robotics teams. It is my aspiration to start a team at Belfast Area High School, and I have a growing list of enthusiastic students. However, securing funding remains a significant obstacle. This bill has the potential to overcome this barrier. By providing matching grants, it would significantly expand access to vital STEAM opportunities across Maine.

Therefore, I urge you to support this crucial legislation and empower more Maine students with the chance to lead, build, and innovate.

Thank you for your time and consideration.