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Robotics  
LD 1740

For over 27 years Northern Force robotics, FIRST Team 172 has competed in the FIRST Robotics Competition providing extended hands on learning for students in a method they cannot get in the classroom. The experience students go through to receive a problem to solve, develop a solution, prototype test and refine as an effective member of a teams, within a tight timeline and requiring multiple skill sets is very consistent with the real world challenge to develop and deliver a product on time. These students learn to collaborate and also to communicate their process and ideas. The compliment of skills executed builds our technology innovators, creators, entrepreneurs, and leaders of the future cultivating workforce readiness for the benefit of Maine's future. The power of this impact lead us to create the STEM Coliseum and Learning Center to provide a space and place for these programs to foster this learning and increase access.

I have seen the impact of this program and the broad network of robotics/mechatronics oriented programs for my whole family and in the broader network of my students that come to a robotics team and the STEM Coliseum and Learning Center. Both students and industry mentors find their people and share or build their passion. Working with industry mentors and talking to judges builds an understanding of the opportunities they have right here in Maine. It also introduces them to opportunities and job paths not generally found in the classroom. This bill provides a pathway to expand these opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math programs in the state. Please support making these invaluable experiences a reality for more students in Maine.