

*LD 823: An Act to Establish a Grant Program to Provide for Statewide and Equitable Access to Experiential Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Competition Programs*

I am writing in support of LD829. I am a teacher at Medomak Valley High School in Waldoboro. I first started bringing students to the Maine State Science Fair in 2018 and have since brought over 160 students from our rural midcoast school. Most recently, I have done work through the Advocates Program with the Society for Science and the Public and my work has added efforts to include students from backgrounds including those from socioeconomic backgrounds that are at major disadvantages from more affluent communities. The opportunity for my students to participate in science fairs has shifted many student's perspectives and has encouraged many, including girls and students from low income families to pursue an education in a STEM based field. Several of our students have earned recognition and earned scholarship opportunities that have been truly life changing. The positive cultural shift in our school and community has been huge. After attending national conferences revolving around science in our country, it is clear that we still have some work to do, but we are so much further ahead of where we were 8 years ago and the work that this program has had produces ripple effects that stretch far and wide.

Not only have my students completed projects with extensive background review, but they professionally present to an audience and connect with mentors in our community. Students have worked with scientists at the Darling Center, Bigelow Laboratory, MDIBL, USM, University of Maine, UMF, UMM, epidemiologists, Ocean Organics, American Ugani, among others. I cannot imagine how much more difficult these connections will be without the Maine State Science Fair being funded and supported.

Please consider continuing to support LD829 as the impact it has had allows students to connect to science in a more meaningful way that is truly serving as an investment in our youth and an investment in our future. High School students are attempting to solve problems TODAY and their ideas are already making a difference in our communities.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Hatch  
Science Teacher  
Medomak Valley High School  
Waldoboro, ME