

Dear LD 1740 Committee Members,

In support of LD 1740, I would like to share with you my experience with the FIRST Robotics in Maine. Competitive robotics teams such as First Robotics and First Lego League have provided exceptional opportunities that are not offered in the traditional classroom to students that are striving to find a higher-level option for math, science, arts, technology and engineering. As you may be aware, there are very few options for students that want to learn more than is available in public education, at least in rural Maine where I live.

My son Tyler had spent months of at-home learning during the COVID times of 2020. He had found a passion for STEAM learning while performing a Rube-Goldberg project at home. I could see a deep desire for his learning and promised him that I would find some sort of opportunity for him to enhance his knowledge of engineering and science. With deep roots in the town of Bingham and unable to relocate, we found that it was not an easy task in finding a place nearby that fit his desire. A UPS driver that served my business had mentioned the Oakland Infinite Loop Robotics Team, so I reached out to see if he could join. We would travel 41 miles after school, as well as receiving shared rides, to get him to the team's location a few times per week. The robotics team was just what he was looking for! I can't say enough about the professional mentors and coaches that have provided Tyler and these students with excessive engineering opportunities of learning 3-Dimensional CAD design, CNC machining, electrical PID control systems, computer Java programming, leadership, budgeting, and engineering strategies, just to name a few. However, this team had spent numerous hours fundraising so that they can just meet the minimum essentials necessary of \$25,000 to keep the team moving forward. This year, the team had a goal of competing at the World Robotics Championship in Houston, Texas. Their dream came true when they placed high enough in the New England Championship in Springfield, MA to be invited to the World Championship. They were one of 3 teams to represent Maine, along with South Portland and Bucksport. The World Championship, on April 16-19, had 600 teams from all over the globe with over 40,000 attendees. The team performed well and made it to the play-offs to top it off! For many, this was an experience of a lifetime with rich technical skills that any employer or college would quickly praise.

Passing LD 1740 will make it more possible for new teams to be introduced throughout other parts of the State of Maine, as well as provide additional matching funding for existing teams to keep up with new technology to be as competitive as other teams from out of state and across the globe. I would highly recommend to create this grant funding as a sustainable way to keep kids involved in high-tech skills. We all know that this will result in a better economy and a better place to live in our great State of Maine.

Sincerely,

Andrew Jacques

Bingham, Maine