

TESTIMONY NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST

L.D. 823—AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE FOR STATEWIDE AND
EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EXPERIENTIAL SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND
MATHEMATICS COMPETITION PROGRAMS

AND

L.D. 1740—AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE MAINE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ARTS
AND MATHEMATICS MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM

May 5, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Eileen King, the Deputy Executive Director of the Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Superintendents Association and the Maine School Boards Association neither for nor against L.D. 823: An Act to Establish a Grant Program to Provide for Statewide and Equitable Access to Experiential Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Competition Programs, and L.D. 1740: An Act to Establish the Maine Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics Matching Grant Program.

Our associations appreciate the efforts of this legislation to boost science, technology, engineering, mathematics and arts programming across the state. Many Maine schools have already made substantial investments in STEAM education, and this bill would complement those efforts and allow more districts to expand their work.

Maine schools have taken advantage of many funding sources, including COVID-19 relief funding, to expand these efforts in numerous ways – adding more outdoor learning opportunities, climate education, and integrating technology into the classroom.

Superintendents and school board members support any efforts to expand this funding to more students – whether in a district that is urban, rural, small, medium or large. On L.D. 1740, we are concerned about some of the requirements and eligibility associated with this grant funding. This program would require that a district provide “matching funds in the amount of 33% of the grant requested.” We appreciate that this program would prioritize lower-income districts, but we are concerned that this matching requirement will nonetheless still make it difficult for many schools to participate. We would encourage the committee to consider lowering this matching requirement or eliminating it, which would allow more districts to contribute.