

MAINE PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION



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TO: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
FROM: Maine Principals' Association Legislative Committee
RE: In Opposition of 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
DATE: May 5, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Dr. Holly Blair, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Principals' Association – Professional Division. The MPA represents more than 700 PreK-12 principals and assistant principals, CTE Directors and Assistant Directors, and Athletic Directors of public and private schools in Maine.

The MPA Legislative Committee is in opposition of LD 823. While expanding access to STEM competition programs is a worthy goal, this bill raises significant concerns regarding funding allocation, sustainability, and the impact on public schools.

First, LD 823 establishes a competitive grant process that includes private and homeschool students, diverting public funds away from public schools. At a time when public schools are already facing financial strain, we must prioritize investments that directly benefit public school students, rather than expanding eligibility to non-public education settings.

Additionally, all of the funding for this initiative is being directed to the Maine Technology Institute (MTI), rather than through the Department of Education or local school districts. This raises concerns about transparency, oversight, and ensuring that funds are used in a way that directly benefits students in public schools.

Furthermore, the grant is only available for two years, with no clear plan for sustainability beyond that period. Once the initial funding runs out, will schools be expected to shoulder the cost of continuing these programs? Without long-term funding solutions, this bill risks creating an unfunded mandate that leaves schools struggling to maintain STEM opportunities after the grant expires.

For these reasons, we urge you to reconsider this bill and explore alternative approaches that ensure funding stays within the public school system, is distributed equitably, and includes a long-term sustainability plan.

Please note that this testimony was submitted based off of the original bill and not additional amendments that may be presented.