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President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

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Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony in Support of LD 1389
An Act to Establish a Mobile Learning Lab

Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
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Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Troy Jackson. I serve as President of the Maine Senate and proudly represent Aroostook County in the Legislature. I am pleased to present to you LD 1389, "An Act to Establish a Mobile Learning Lab."

I want to begin by thanking Educate Maine for bringing this bill to my attention. As the title of the bill suggests, the learning lab is mobile and will bring hands-on learning to rural and underserved communities throughout the state. The purpose and motivation driving this project is equity and service. Many small and isolated towns do not have the funds to provide state of the art technology, nor do they have the resources to bring their students to programs offered by universities, museums, and philanthropic organizations. LD 1389 will bring enrichment directly to their door.

The bill supports an ongoing project spearheaded by Educate Maine, Northeastern's Roux Institute. Learning Undefeated and the Bioscience Association of Maine. The project has received federal funds to cover the purchase of the bus, the lab equipment, and a portion of the staff. The additional expenditure offered in LD 1389 will get the bus up and running. It will supply the funds to complete the planning phase and to develop a challenging curriculum.

The objective is to have traveling educators partner with local teachers to offer high quality, experiential learning to supplement what is currently offered in middle and high school classes. The curriculum focus is on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). The mobile lab will be furnished with cutting edge equipment. This will give students the opportunity to work with technology that many schools cannot afford due to its high capital cost and its upkeep. Another advantage of engaging more students in these emerging fields is the experience they will gain. It is an investment in the lives of our youth.

This project makes sense. Our students deserve the opportunity to grow and learn no matter what part of the state they live in. So I ask you to join me in supporting this Mobile Learning Lab. I am happy to answer any questions you may have, but there are others who will follow that can give you more specifics with regard to travel plans, curriculum, and schedules.