

# FOCUSMAINE

The Joint Standing Committee on Taxation  
Testimony from Dana O'Brien, President of FocusMaine

## In Support Of

L.D. 1475

An Act to Promote Biomanufacturing and Biotechnology Development by Establishing a Tax Credit

18 April 2023

Good afternoon, chairs and members of the committee. My name is Dana O'Brien. I live in Ogunquit and am the president of FocusMaine, a statewide economic development organization centered on propelling our state's food economy and bioeconomy. I rise today in support of LD 1475.

FocusMaine's strategy is to develop and execute multifaceted programs to catalyze the growth of very specific economic sectors. Those sectors are chosen based on evidence and data showing where Maine has a unique opportunity to make a major play.

FocusMaine is excited about Senator Jackson's legislation and your interest in promoting innovation. LD 1475 is a creative, modest tax measure that would enhance Maine's biomanufacturing sector, as well as its competitive advantage in attracting biotech companies interested in moving to Maine – or doing some of their research in Maine.

We must capitalize on momentum in our state.

There is a blossoming biotechnology and data science hub in Cumberland County where transformative investments and collaborations are centered on the Roux Institute, the University of Maine System, Southern Maine Community College, the University of New England, MaineHealth, and more.

In other parts of the state, academic, R&D, and business leaders are generating innovative health, food, and construction solutions through biotechnology. Think about biobased composites work at U-Maine Orono, medical breakthroughs at The Jackson Laboratory, and aquaculture advancements via Bigelow, the Downeast Institute, and the University of Maine.

For logical reasons, evidence shows that Maine is ripe to capitalize on its proximity to the Boston biotech epicenter. We are well positioned to capture the overflow of infrastructure and jobs reverberating out of Boston. A recent study published by the trade group MassBio notes that so much money is flowing into Boston biotechnology that demand is outpacing the Commonwealth's existing infrastructure and workforce capabilities.

Other New England states are taking steps to welcome this overflow – to attract businesses and talent, to enhance in-state educational and training opportunities, to generate new revenue through business growth. And Massachusetts, after investing in transforming the Boston-Cambridge hub, is now incentivizing biotech development along the I-495 Corridor and beyond.

Now is the time for Maine to put its stake in the ground. To partner with the private sector. To compete with states in the region and, in doing so, transform our economy.

Private sector companies in Boston want to come to Maine. They want to be part of this blossoming ecosystem. They want their employees to enjoy our quality of life. But there is some measure of risk for them to move their companies here. We can be seen as an unknown commodity to investors.

So, let's work to de-risk Maine. Show these companies and their investors that we mean business – that our government, our great research organizations, and industry understand and are taking overt steps to make Maine a hospitable business environment for this set of transformative companies.

Through our work over the past five years, FocusMaine is connected to more than 50 small biotech companies eager to explore doing business in Maine – if the right conditions exist. Some of those company leaders are testifying today.

We are excited about this opportunity and look forward to working with you.