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### *Testimony in Support of*

## **LD 416 An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for Research and Development and Commercialization**

*April 24, 2023*

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, thank you for permitting me to speak as a cosponsor. And thanks to Senator Pierce for introducing this bill.

This bond would give Maine voters an opportunity to move towards a better future. The Maine Technology Institute is a responsible custodian and key catalyst for innovation grants, and I'd like to speak to two of the areas mentioned in this bill.

1. Biotechnology. A key finding of the LD 1771 Task Force in December was that Maine can and ought to further establish itself as a hub of biotechnology. A great example is the Jackson Laboratory in Hancock County. Jax is a world-class research institution at the forefront of scientific discovery, education and training. It conducts and enables crucial research to address a wide variety of awful diseases in neurology, cardiology, oncology and other areas. The development of practically every new drug created in the world at some point requires a Jax mouse. In 2018, the Maine Technology Institute provided \$12.5M to match the \$47.5M that Jax itself invested for phase 2 of the Ellsworth Vivarium.<sup>1</sup> Many legislators here today got to see some of the fruits of that investment on the Legislative bus tour. Moreover, the jobs that investment created, the economic growth and spinoff benefits, and the reinforcement of Jax's international business and scholarly reputation, all will pay dividends to the people of Maine for decades. Jax itself could elaborate better than I could.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.jax.org/news-and-insights/2018/february/the-jackson-laboratory-receives-millions-for-ellsworth-expansion>

2. Environmental technology is also mentioned in this bill. Manufactured wood products, like cross-laminated timber, are very important building technologies both for boosting our timber economy, and addressing climate change. In fact, the Maine Forest Products Council and environmental advocates like the Maine Conservation Voters joined forces to support the strongly bipartisan LD 881, aimed at advancing Maine’s leadership regarding this important new technology.

This committee certainly understands how economic growth helps the budget. Please also remember that economic vitality plays a role in human health and wellness. Poverty is a major determinant of health.<sup>2</sup> This is true for heart disease, diabetes, stroke and other chronic conditions.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, economic struggle is *the* primary driver of child neglect and abuse, as the Office of Child and Family Services has repeatedly testified over in the Health and Human Services Committee. Economic opportunities also help fight the opioid epidemic by giving people hope in the future. To address health issues on a large scale in Maine, we have to take a systemic approach, and a vibrant economy is a major ingredient.

That’s what I like so much about this bill. It would help grow the economy in innovative ways for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One suggested amendment, which I discussed with the sponsor, would be to permit “strategic demonstration” be considered in MTI’s grant competition. For example, a prominent demonstration of cross-laminated timber construction could foster commercialization. E.g. by inserting “or strategic demonstration” into Section 5, line 36:

The funds must be allocated in support of technological innovation or strategic demonstration, leading to commercialization in the targeted sectors

Thank you very much. I’d be happy to answer questions at the pleasure of the committee.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/poverty>

<sup>3</sup> “Health, Income, And Poverty: Where We Are And What Could Help,” Health Affairs Health Policy Brief, October 4, 2018. DOI: 10.1377/hpb20180817.901935. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20180817.901935/full/>