

Good afternoon Sen. Rotundo, Rep. Sachs and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. My name is Linda Caprara and I am a resident of Winthrop. I am the Vice President of Advocacy for the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and I am testifying in strong support of L.D. 416, “An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Stimulate Investment in Innovation by Maine Businesses Issue for Research and Development and Commercialization.” We thank Sen. Pierce for sponsoring the bill.

In this high-tech digital age of intense global competition, it is absolutely critical that Maine companies have the tools they need to invest in innovation to grow our economy. The strength of our economy depends upon it.

Maine companies compete regionally and globally. To keep up with the demands of the regional and global marketplace, companies have to constantly stay ahead of the competition. Investing in R&D to improve existing products and services and to discover and develop new products to bring to market is essential. Investing in the necessary technology and equipment to upgrade and accomplish this is very costly. Investments made in R&D enable our companies to gain and hold market share in their respective industries and both preserves and grows jobs in our state.

The importance of R&D and an innovation economy is outlined in Maine’s 10 Year Strategic plan, which identifies key areas of growth throughout the state. The importance of R&D is also highlighted in the “Making Maine Work” report which was a collaborative effort between the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, Educate Maine and Maine Development Foundation. The report provides recommendations for public private investments to improve Maine’s economy and quality of life. One of the goals in this report is to champion investments in innovation by increasing R&D spending; Maine currently lags behind the country in R&D spending at both the private and public sector. The report cites that we could double our current R&D investment and not run out of worthy, competitive, projects to fund. As a state we need to dedicate more resources to R&D, and we are fortunate to have the Maine Technology Institute, which has a proven track record of successfully stewarding the State’s investments, to administer these resources. By capitalizing the Maine Technology Asset Fund and empowering MTI to manage the competitive award process, Maine could make great strides in implementing the 10 Year Strategic Plan and growing the Maine economy through public – private partnerships and financial investments.

There are some very exciting things happening across the State, from disease research discoveries at The Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, to the creation of high performance insulated panels made from recycled glass bottles at Acadian Composite Materials, in Limestone. These are just two of the many organizations that have benefited from competitively awarded MTAF funds and the products they make and distribute, benefit Mainers and the Maine economy.

The focus on innovation to strengthen Maine’s economy and to preserve and expand job opportunities cannot be underscored. Let’s not lose sight of the importance of R&D in keeping Maine businesses and our workers, globally competitive. We urge you to vote yes on L.D. 416 .