



Susan Bernard  
Senator, District 1

**THE MAINE SENATE**  
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

**LD 361, "An Act to Help the Francis Malcolm Science Center"**

**Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**

**March 27, 2025**

**1:00pm**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Sue Bernard; I am the State Senator representing District 1, comprised of 37 municipalities in Northern Aroostook County.

I am proud to sponsor LD 361, "An Act to Help the Francis Malcolm Science Center."

For 42 years, the Francis Malcolm Science Center has had a role in educating students in Aroostook County. The Center offers many activities to its visitors, including shows in the planetarium theater, informational hikes, and map reading classes.

These robust programs attracted 2600 students from Fort Kent to Patten and drew in another 300 visitors for night and weekend shows during the '24- '25 school year. Their programs are designed by retired educators with an eye to helping current educators introduce, supplement, or end units -- keeping the programs relevant with the subjects that students learn in school.

In addition to attracting students, Neighboring Town managers credit the Center as a reason people move to the community. To quote Tim Goff, the Town manager of Fort Fairfield:

I can tell you that the unique attractions like the Science Center, its planetarium, the research being done using our dark skies with the telescopes and other instrumentation housed on sight, and other recreational activities... help make our communities attractive to live and work in.

In recent years, like many of our community institutions, the Francis Malcolm Science Center has struggled to recover from the COVID -19 shutdowns. During these times of struggle, the Center has tried to find ways to recover, taking measures such as receiving funding from area schools, requesting homeschoolers to pay a nominal fee, and charging community members a \$5 donation. They also charge to hold special events such as birthdays, weddings, etc. In addition to

measures to offset costs, they are also operating with an all-volunteer staff. The onetime funds being requested will help allow the Francis Malcolm Science Center to fully recover and thrive once again.

These one-time funds to help bridge the gap will allow the Center to hire two contract educators (alleviating the 8 hour a day workload currently placed on volunteers), conduct necessary maintenance, and rebuild their marketing to become self-sustaining again.

Today you will hear from many of the people who are involved in the Francis Malcolm Science Center, as well as many who have benefitted from attending the Center's programs. The Science Center is the only one of its kind north of Bangor. The high-quality educational programs it provides are critically important for those who live in Aroostook County. I urge you to vote Ought To Pass to support the Francis Malcolm Science Center.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer questions.