

Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Testimony of Jacob Donahue, Citizen of Scarborough

In Support of LD 506

LD 506, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for Research and Development and
Commercialization

April 9, 2025

Senator Rotund, Representative Gattine, and esteemed members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.

My name is Jacob Donahue. I am a resident of Scarborough and a recent University of Southern Maine graduate, and I am honored to testify in support of LD 506.

According to the Maine Economic Improvement Fund Report in 2024, Maine currently ranks 37th in total Research & Development (R&D) funding, currently investing only 1.1% of its gross state product in R&D. This is in comparison to the national average of 3.6% and the New England average of 5.7%.

The 2023 Maine Innovation Economy Action Plan calls for doubling investments in Maine's R&D efforts in biosciences. LD 506 provides the necessary funds to ignite this initiative, accelerating commercialization, entrepreneurship, workforce development, and research capacity. As a biologist who is struggling to find work in research and development, particularly in a position that can support the current cost of living in Maine, I cannot express enough the importance of increased funding for R&D.

Increased funding, however, isn't just beneficial to the young entrepreneurs and scientific workforce, but investments can deliver exceptional returns for taxpayers. In 2017, a \$45 million R&D bond was approved by Maine voters, which created just over 5000 jobs and, according to the Maine Technology Institute data, generated \$1.4 billion in economic activity. That's a 31x return. Investing R&D directly boost jobs, new business creation, educational opportunities, and tax revenue. And according to the 2023 Industry Impact Report published by the Bioscience Association of Maine, the life science industry generates \$2.6 billion annually in economic impact, and it supports 9,540 jobs across 484 organizations. I and many other young scientists in Maine would like to contribute to the growth of those numbers, but we are not able to without increased public funding from bills such as LD 506.

Passing LD 506 in 2025 ensures that Maine will capitalize on existing public enthusiasm for the industry. According to Maine Morning Star in 2024, nearly 60% of Maine voters approved a \$30 million R&D bond, showing strong bipartisan support. Voter support signals the need to build momentum, not pause progress. And I am a voter that agrees, we need this state funded support to further advance bioscience progress in Maine.

LD 506 is a smart investment to close Maine's R&D gap, deliver extraordinary economic returns, and build a thriving innovation economy. Every dollar invested will create new jobs, businesses, and opportunities that benefit Maine families and communities. Thank you for your time.