

**Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs**

**Testimony of Valerie Young, Chief of Staff, Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences**

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

**April 9, 2025**

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

My name is Valerie Young, and I am proud to represent Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in East Boothbay, where we conduct cutting-edge marine research that fuels innovation, supports Maine's blue economy, and strengthens environmental resilience.

I am here today to testify in strong support of LD 506.

Maine is at a critical juncture. While we face unprecedented challenges—from climate change to workforce needs—we also have extraordinary potential. Research and development is the engine that powers innovation-based solutions, and right now, Maine is underinvesting in that future. As you know, our state ranks 37th in total R&D funding nationally, investing just 1.1% of gross state product compared to a national average of 3.6%. We cannot afford to fall further behind.

LD 506 offers a targeted and transformative investment. At Bigelow Laboratory, we've seen firsthand how public R&D support translates into real-world impact. A \$4.5 million grant administered by the Maine Technology Institute in 2012 was critical to the construction of our state-of-the-art laboratory in East Boothbay, rapidly expanding our research capacity and creating new jobs. Since that time, Bigelow Laboratory has increased staff by 60 percent and recognized \$223 million in revenue from state, federal, industry, and private philanthropic support.

Other state funds have bolstered our efforts to understand harmful PFAS "forever chemical" pollutants in Maine's waters, reduce methane emissions from cattle, develop technology to support local aquaculture, and accelerate innovative and sustainable products from algae.

Investments like those supported by this bond will help us attract top-tier talent, foster collaboration with industry partners, and create quality jobs in Maine's growing life sciences and blue economy sectors.



This bond is also a critical step toward realizing the Maine Innovation Economy Action Plan. The goal of 10,000 new innovation jobs by 2030 is ambitious—but attainable, with smart, sustained public investment. LD 506 will unlock new opportunities for commercialization, workforce development, and federal matching funds that multiply every state dollar spent.

Most importantly, Mainers support this. Voters approved a \$25 million R&D bond in 2024 with nearly 60% backing. They believe in science, innovation, and in building a stronger, more resilient Maine. We should build on that momentum—not pause.

In closing, LD 506 is not just a smart investment. It is a necessary one. It ensures that institutions like Bigelow Laboratory—and all of Maine’s research, academic, and innovation partners—can drive discoveries that matter for our economy, our environment, and our future.

Thank you for your time, and I respectfully urge you to support LD 506.

Sincerely,  
Valerie Young, Chief of Staff  
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences

