

**Testimony of Linda Caprara**  
**On Behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce**  
**in Support of L.D. 506, “An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for Research and Development and Commercialization.”**  
**April 9, 2025**

Good Morning, Sen. Rotundo, Rep. Gattine and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. My name is Linda Caprara. I am the Vice President of Advocacy for the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. I am here today to testify in support of L.D. 506, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue for Research and Development and Commercialization.

We would like to thank Sen. Pierce for sponsoring this important piece of legislation.

We feel strongly that L.D. 506 will encourage more R & D (research & development) investment in the State. The bill provides for a \$50 million bond issue that will be used to provide for funds for research and development as prioritized by the Maine Innovation Economy Advisory Board’s most recent innovation economy action plan and the Department of Economic & Community Development, Office of Innovation’s most recent science and technology action plan.

L.D. 506 is just one of the several pieces of legislation we have testified in support of this session that deal with encouraging more R & D in this State. It’s pretty simple. If Maine is to grow its economy, it must focus on innovation. We can’t as a State lose sight of the importance of R & D. Innovation is necessary for economic growth and productivity, job creation and competitiveness in the global economy and R & D is the driver innovation, which is responsible for developing new products, new services, new efficiencies, new technologies that are critical to compete globally.

The bill requires that the funds be allocated in support of technological innovation leading to commercialization in the following sectors: environmental and renewable energy technology, biomedical technology, life sciences, information technology, advanced technologies for forestry and agriculture, aquaculture and marine technology, composites and advanced materials and precision manufacturing.

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. Encouraging investment does just that. It also provides workers in these fields with the latest tools to help to improve the products produced to achieve that competitive edge. Maintaining this edge

depends upon continual investment. Since Maine companies compete globally, it's essential to keep up with the demands of the global marketplace, companies have to constantly stay ahead of the competition. Anything that encourages and incentivizes companies to invest in the necessary technology and equipment to help discover and develop *new* products to bring to market and to improve existing products to gain and hold market share in their respective industries is critical to ensure this edge.

Past R&D bonds have helped leverage the success of Maine businesses by fueling the development of new products, creating quality jobs, and attracting private investment. These targeted investments have strengthened the state's innovation economy, expanding manufacturing and positioning Maine companies to compete in national and global markets. A few notable examples of businesses who have leveraged R&D bond funding include STARC Systems and Ready Seafood. STARC Systems used the \$307,500 they received, supported by matching funds of \$4.4M, to invest in automated equipment for producing isolation panels, aiding in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in hospitals. Since receiving those funds, they've added 50 employees. Ready Seafood established a 52,000-square-foot facility to aid in the holding and processing of lobster, which was previously sent to Canada for processing. With this investment, they were able to add 40 full-time positions, bolstering the local economy and enhancing sustainability in Maine's lobster industry.

Investments in research and development are absolutely critical to strengthening an economy and provide the power for innovation, which is key to driving economic growth and productivity. For years, Maine has lagged behind other states in research and development spending. Maine's ranking nationally is towards the bottom of the pack at 37th for R & D spending, which is not good. We as a State need to do better. Maintaining our ability to compete depends on it.

For all these reasons and more, we urge the Committee to pass LD 506 to support innovation, drive economic prosperity, and ensure that Maine remains a leader in research and technological development.

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