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**THE MAINE SENATE**  
132nd Legislature

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*Testimony of Senate Majority Leader Teresa S. Pierce introducing*

**LD 1643, An Act to Establish the Maine Life Science Innovation Center**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Housing & Economic Development*

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Good afternoon, Chair Curry, Chair Gere and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Teresa Pierce. I represent Senate District 25, which includes Falmouth, Cumberland, North Yarmouth, Yarmouth (majority), Gray, and Long Island, and have the privilege of serving as Senate Majority Leader. I am here today to present LD 1643, "An Act to Establish the Maine Life Science Innovation Center."

Maine's life science sector is primed for growth, backed by world-class research institutions, leading universities, and an expanding base of innovative companies.

Life sciences are already a bright spot in Maine's economy and could become a cornerstone of our long-term growth strategy. But to get there, we need a focused entity to lead and implement a statewide strategy that brings our unique strengths together.

LD 1643 proposes the Maine Life Science Innovation Center to fill that gap.

The Center will serve as a hub to expand Maine's life science sector. It will develop a clear growth strategy, supporting collaboration, and guiding funding to spur business activity. In doing so, it will strengthen our economy, grow jobs, and improve health outcomes for Mainers. This bill is about focus. It's about taking what Maine already does well, in science, health, and natural resources, and helping it grow faster, in more parts of the state, with more benefits to Maine people.

This isn't coordination for coordination's sake. It is an organizing force to turn research into products, scale startups, create jobs, and give more Maine students a reason to stay and build their careers here.

Why life sciences? Because this sector is already delivering for Maine, contributing \$2.3 billion annually to GDP, supporting nearly 10,000 jobs, and growing 31% faster than other sectors. Wages are 63% above the state average.

Life sciences in Maine aren't abstract. And they go far beyond human health. They are applied, commercial, and rooted in Maine strengths – for instance, when you think “life sciences,” envision the following:

- Medical and aging-related innovation
- Aquaculture and fish health
- Seaweed-based products
- Veterinary medicine
- Sustainable food systems
- Forest-derived biomaterials

We are already generating real businesses, jobs, and innovation in these areas, much of it emerging directly from our world-class research institutions. LD 1643 is designed to build on that competitive advantage.

Maine is one of the few states where natural resources and health innovation meet. Biotech and data are transforming sectors we know well – farming, fishing, and forestry – into modern engines of growth. But to expand on these early wins, we need a unified strategy accountable to the state that brings it all together.

Maine has great organizations and partners working to grow our economy, including the Department of Economic and Community Development, Maine Technology Institute, the Finance Authority of Maine, and others.

These organizations are the foundation of our state's overall economic strategy, but no one has a full-time mandate to grow life sciences statewide. The Center will take on that role, and will help to:

- Accelerate company formation and commercialization
- Expand workforce training and career pathways
- Coordinate Maine's response to federal and private funding opportunities
- Help our institutions and entrepreneurs compete nationally

The concept for this Center is not necessarily about buildings or infrastructure but is rather about action and expansion.

As you are aware, there is \$3M proposed in the second year of the biennium in the Governor's budget to help grow the life science sector. Our vision is that the funding could be used for people, programming, and strategy, not brick and mortar.

It could fund a small, capable staff supported by a cross-sector board of directors, who engage in additional fundraising efforts and develop initial programming. If infrastructure is needed later, that would be decided by the board, along with any other tactics they choose to support.

Along those same lines, I also sponsored LD 506, which proposes a \$50M R&D bond to fund innovation infrastructure across Maine's seven technology sectors.

Life sciences is a thread that runs through nearly all those technology sectors, and therefore the Center could provide partnership and counsel to MTI in terms of how those bond resources are deployed.

States that have taken similar steps are now reaping long-term returns.

In North Carolina, a coordinated life science strategy has helped attract significant external investment, generating a reported **73-to-1 return on public dollars**. Rhode Island recently committed \$45 million to launch its own life science hub, with strong support from its anchor institutions, including a \$13 million pledge from Brown University. Massachusetts' early decision to prioritize life sciences through a dedicated center helped it become a global biotech leader. Each of these examples shows what's possible when a state moves with intention and clarity.

Maine has the building blocks. What we lack is the connective tissue, a structure to move faster, compete harder, and make the most of what we already have. LD 1643 gives us the mechanism to do that.

We're not trying to build a version of Boston or Raleigh here in Maine. We're looking to learn from what's worked elsewhere and apply those lessons in a way that fits our economy, our geography, and our potential. We want to build something that reflects who we are: a state with strong research institutions, deep natural resource expertise, and a commitment to rural prosperity.

This Center will help us organize and amplify those strengths in a way that positions Maine to lead in our own right. This is about creating good jobs, supporting homegrown innovation, and making sure that the next generation of Maine students, workers, and entrepreneurs can build their future here. It's about taking what we do well and giving it the strategic lift it deserves.

I urge you to support this bill as a smart, targeted investment in the kind of economy we want to build together – a future ready Maine economy that is innovation-driven, locally grounded, and built to last.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this bill. I am happy to answer any questions you may have and would defer to the advocates who will speak following me for specifics.