



Bioscience Association of Maine

Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development
Testimony of Agnieszka Carpenter, Executive Director, Bioscience Association of Maine

In Support of LD 1643

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

April 24, 2025

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and esteemed members of the Joint Committee on Housing and Economic Development.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of LD 1643. My name is Agnieszka Carpenter, and I serve as Executive Director of the Bioscience Association of Maine (BioME), the statewide trade association for Maine's life sciences industry.

Today, I urge you to support this bill because the future of Maine's economy, and the opportunities we create for the next generation, depend on decisions like this.

About BioME and Our Members

The Bioscience Association of Maine (BioME) is the statewide trade group representing life science companies and vendors, research institutions, nonprofits, and educational partners across Maine. We serve more than 200 member organizations ranging from global leaders in biomedical research to small startups focused on aquaculture, sustainable agriculture, and medical devices.

A small snapshot of our members, including their professional and geographic diversity:

- **IDEXX in Westbrook** – developing comprehensive and innovative biological materials testing and laboratory animal diagnostic instruments and more.
- **Puritan Medical Products in Guilford** – known worldwide as the most trusted manufacturer of swabs.
- **Salmonics in Brunswick** – developing and manufacturing products from aquaculture salmon blood for applications in biomedical research.
- **The Baker Company in Sanford** – pioneering solutions for air containment and control in laboratory environments.
- **Elanco in Winslow** – innovating and delivering products to prevent and treat diseases in farm animals and pets.
- **ImmuCell Corporation in Portland** – using biology to improve the health and productivity of dairy and beef cattle.
- **The Jackson Laboratory and MDI Biological Laboratory in Bar Harbor** – global leaders in biomedical research.

- **Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences** in *East Boothbay* – conducting ocean and aquaculture-related biotech research.
- **MaineHealth Institute for Research** in *Scarborough* – advancing translational medicine and clinical trials.
- **University of Maine** in *Orono and across the state* – turning our knowledge of forestry into biobased products and much more.
- **The Roux Institute at Northeastern University** in *Portland* – fostering life science entrepreneurship and data science innovation.
- **University of New England** in *Biddeford* – preparing the next generation of health care professionals and researchers.

These are just a few of the innovative organizations advancing science and growing jobs across Maine. What unites them is a shared commitment to health, sustainability, and creating opportunity in every region of the state.

What Are Life Sciences in Maine?

When we say, “life sciences,” we don’t mean something abstract or distant. We mean the work happening right now in towns and research labs from all corners of our state – work that saves the lives of our loved ones, protects the health of people and animals, strengthens our environment, and drives new industries rooted in science, technology, and Maine’s natural strengths.

Life sciences in Maine include:

- **Human health:** diagnostics, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and medical research
- **Animal health:** vaccines, livestock therapeutics, and fish health
- **Natural resource innovation:** seaweed-based packaging and animal feed, forest-derived biomaterials, and climate-focused agriculture

Maine is one of the only states where health innovation and natural resource innovation are deeply connected. That is our competitive edge.

A Strong Foundation, a Critical Opportunity

Maine’s life sciences sector is already one of the fastest-growing parts of our economy. According to BioME’s 2024 industry impact report:

- The sector contributes over **\$2.3 billion** annually to Maine’s economy
- It supports nearly **10,000 jobs** across **587 organizations**
- It has grown by **31% in employment** over the last five years
- Average salaries are **63% higher** than the state’s private-sector average

As noted earlier, this is not a Portland-only industry. Life science companies are growing across the state. They are hiring locally, supporting year-round employment, and working in fields that matter to Mainers: aquaculture, cancer research, food safety, aging, and environmental health.

What we lack, however, is coordination. We have strong research institutions and promising companies, but they are too often working in silos. Other states have already built centralized life sciences hubs to help them grow strategically. And they're winning.

What LD 1643 Will Do

LD 1643 creates the **Maine Life Science Innovation Center**, a lean, smart, and highly focused organization with one purpose: to connect the dots across Maine's growing life science ecosystem and help it reach its full potential.

This is not a new agency. It's not about buildings or bureaucracy. It's about putting in place a small, capable team, guided by a cross-sector board, whose job is to align Maine's efforts, sharpen our strategy, and ensure we're delivering impact statewide.

The Center will:

- Align life science investments with Maine's economic, health, and climate goals
- Help new and existing companies grow across all regions of the state
- Expand workforce training through partnerships with employers and educators
- Compete more effectively for federal and philanthropic dollars

Maine already benefits from strong federal research support, through the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and others. And our congressional delegation, with its leadership on key committees, gives us a unique window of opportunity. But let's be clear: federal funding is becoming more competitive, and future dollars will flow to states that are aligned, organized, and ready to deliver.

This Center ensures that Maine is one of those states. It gives us the structure to compete nationally, support our businesses more effectively, and make the most of every research and economic development dollar.

The **\$3 million proposed in the Governor's budget** is an important start, and LD 1643 makes sure those funds are put to work strategically. The Center is built to raise outside funds and minimize future budget demands. It's a self-sustaining model, designed to deliver results, not overhead.

Why the Center Should Be Independent

We want to be clear that we value the important work of Maine's existing economic development organizations, including the Maine Technology Institute (MTI), the Department of Economic and Community Development, and regional partners who play key roles in business support and investment. We view the proposed Center as a collaborator with these institutions, not a replacement.

That said, no current entity has a clear mandate to focus exclusively on the life sciences – to unify health, biotech, marine, agricultural, and environmental innovation under one

coordinated strategy. The life sciences sector spans multiple traditional categories, and because of that, it often falls between the cracks. Maine needs a dedicated organization with the expertise, authority, and responsibility to:

- Lead a statewide life science strategy
- Serve as the front door for startups, funders, and partners
- Align research, workforce, and commercialization efforts under one roof

States like Massachusetts and North Carolina made this move years ago and our neighbor Rhode Island recently took steps to accelerate its life science sector. These states are moving and now reaping the rewards in jobs, investment, and national funding. Maine should do the same.

Why This Matters, Especially Now

This bill is about growing good jobs. It's about building companies that stay in Maine, that hire our graduates, and that root innovation in rural and coastal communities.

It's also about giving young people a reason to stay in Maine. If we want to stop exporting talent, we need to show students and workers that they can build a future here in careers that matter, in industries that are growing, and in communities they love.

And this bill is about timing. If we wait, we fall behind. Rhode Island invested \$45 million just last year. Massachusetts, New York, Utah, and North Carolina are moving fast and capturing investment. Maine's proposed \$3 million is modest but paired with a proposed \$50 million R&D bond that will fund infrastructure, it gives us a chance to leap forward, not play catch-up.

Closing

Maine has the research. We have the talent. We have the momentum. What we need is structure, strategy, and sustained leadership to take the next step.

LD 1643 is how we do that with a smart, efficient approach that respects taxpayer dollars and sets us up to win.

On behalf of BioME's members and the thousands of Mainers who already work in this sector, as well as the many more who could, I urge you to support this bill. It is an investment in our economy, our future, and our people.

Thank you. My Board and I are happy to meet with you to talk more about why LD 1643 is so valuable to our state and the innovators sitting within and alongside the Bioscience Association of Maine.

LD 1643

An Act To Establish the Maine
Life Science Innovation Center
Senator Teresa Pierce

A Strategic Investment in Our Future

Maine's life sciences sector is a key part of the state's future economy—spanning medicine, animal health, marine biology, agriculture, forestry, and data science. This industry has immense potential to drive economic growth, create jobs, and enhance public health. **The Maine Life Science Innovation Center** will centralize coordination, uniting stakeholders and resources to implement an impactful statewide life science economic development strategy.

Problem Statement

Maine's life science sector is exhibiting organic growth, but strategies to accelerate sector development are fragmented and State financial support for R&D is insufficient. Maine ranks 37th in the nation for R&D activity, with life sciences contributing only 1% to the state's GDP compared to the national average of 3%. Neighboring states like Rhode Island and New Hampshire are making significant investments, while Maine lacks cohesive public-private partnerships to deploy incentives, expand talent pools, and support innovation infrastructure.

Solution

The Maine Life Science Innovation Center will serve as a strategic coordinating organization, reducing fragmentation, accelerating investment, and strengthening collaboration. By leveraging Maine's expertise in human and animal health, ocean science, agriculture, and forestry, the Center will unify efforts, align with state strategies, and enhance economic and environmental outcomes while promoting public health.

Operations

The Center will develop and implement statewide strategies to: 1) promote Maine as a premier destination for life sciences; 2) strengthen the talent pipeline within Maine; 3) enhance research, patent generation, and commercialization efforts; 4) improve business development and attraction; and 5) advocate for policies, grant funding, and partnerships that enhance Maine's competitiveness. A Board will govern the Center and oversee the management of the Maine Life Science Innovation Fund, which will support clinical trials, business expansion, and infrastructure investments to grow life sciences in Maine.

Funding

The Life Science Innovation Fund will receive funds, gifts, grants, and other revenue sources to support the Center's operations. The proposed legislation includes an initial budget of \$4 million from the State over two years.

Accelerating Maine's Innovation Economy

BIOME
Bioscience Association of Maine

R&D Acceleration

Bigelow Laboratory, MaineHealth, MDI Biological Laboratory, The Jackson Laboratory, The Roux Institute, University of Maine, University of New England, Others

Industry & Startup Support

Bigelow Laboratory, Coastal Enterprises, Inc., FocusMaine, Maine & Co., Maine Center for Entrepreneurs, Maine SBDC, SCORE Maine, The Roux Institute, University of Maine, Others

Infrastructure & Investment

Finance Authority of Maine, Local Governments, Maine & Co., Maine DECD, Maine International Trade Center, Maine Technology Institute, Maine Venture Fund, Others

Maine Life Science Innovation Center

*One-stop-shop
Coordinated state strategy*

Promotion & Public Engagement

Bigelow Laboratory, BioME, Educate Maine, FocusMaine, Maine & Co., MaineHealth, MDI Biological Laboratory, State of Maine, The Jackson Laboratory, The Roux Institute, University of Maine, Others

Regulatory & Policy Advocacy

BioME, Others

Workforce & Talent Pipeline

Bigelow Laboratory, BioME, Community Colleges, Educate Maine, Maine DOE, Maine DOL, MDI Biological Laboratory, The Roux Institute, University of Maine, University of New England, Others