



Testimony of Sarah Delmar
On behalf of FocusMaine

In support of LD 1643, An Act to Establish the Maine Life Science Innovation Center
before the Committee on Housing and Economic Development
April 24, 2025

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Good afternoon, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and honorary members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development. My name is Sarah Delmar, and I serve as the life sciences consultant for FocusMaine, a private-sector-led economic development organization dedicated to accelerating job growth and strengthening Maine's economy by advancing high-potential sectors such as life sciences and the state's food economy.

I am here today to voice our strong support for LD 1643, which proposes the creation of the Maine Life Science Innovation Center. This bill represents a crucial step toward building the infrastructure, capacity, and coordination required to grow our life sciences sector. Maine's life sciences industry currently contributes \$2.6 billion annually and supports nearly 10,000 jobs. But, with a concentrated and coordinated focus it has the potential to drive much more economic growth, and to unlock much more value from Maine's natural resources through science and innovation.

As someone who has spent 14 years working in regions around the world to build innovation-based economies, I can tell you: every successful life sciences cluster—whether in Boston, the Research Triangle in North Carolina, or Rhode Island—has something in common. It didn't happen by accident. It was the result of intentional, sustained investment and strong public-private partnerships.

What does a Life Sciences Innovation Center actually do?

At its core, a center like this serves three essential functions:

1. **Strategic Alignment:** It unites Maine's existing assets—research institutions, entrepreneurs, educators, workforce initiatives, and investors—into a coordinated effort with a clear strategy and mandate for growth, ensuring that public and private resources are moving in the same direction and that progress can be tracked against defined goals.
2. **Signal:** It sends a strong message that life sciences is a strategic priority for the state, which helps attract national attention, unlock federal grants, and build investor confidence.
3. **Framework for Investment:** It provides a structure to guide and coordinate investment into the areas that matter most—such as talent development, specialized infrastructure (like shared lab space), and startup support. Rather than fragmented or one-off efforts, resources can be targeted where they'll have the greatest impact and scaled over time for sustainable growth.

Other states have shown us what's possible.

Rhode Island launched the **Life Sciences Hub** in 2023 with \$45 million in public funding to coordinate R&D, commercialization, and workforce development—proving that even small states can lead with strategic investment.

St. Louis built the **Cortex Innovation District** through a public-private partnership that now anchors a thriving bioscience and innovation economy.

Pittsburgh, once known for steel, is now a growing hub for innovation, thanks to the coordinated effort of the **Pittsburgh Life Sciences Alliance**, which brings together universities, health systems, and civic leaders to drive growth in the sector.

And in **Massachusetts**, the **Life Sciences Center** has deployed \$800 million in public funds and generated over \$15 billion in economic output—a 19-to-1 return on investment. While Maine isn't trying to be Boston, this shows the scale of impact when investment is focused and sustained.

These examples underscore an important point: **No single institution can do this alone.** A statewide innovation center gives Maine the platform we need to convene stakeholders, steer investment, and measure results.

In Maine, we are already seeing promising signs of life sciences growth—from early-stage biotech startups and novel aquaculture health products, to diagnostics manufacturing and AI-driven drug discovery. But without a center of gravity to support and scale this activity, we will fall miserably short of our potential.

LD 1643 ensures we do not let that happen. It provides the mechanism and mandate to coordinate, brand, and build Maine's life sciences sector for the long term.

On behalf of FocusMaine, I urge you to support LD 1643 and help make Maine a national leader in life sciences innovation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.

Warm regards,



Sarah Delmar
Partner, Delmar Group
On behalf of FocusMaine