



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL DUGUAY
COMMISSIONER

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Testimony of Michael Duguay

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

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and Members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Mike Duguay and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding LD 1643, An Act to Establish the Maine Life Science Innovation Center and its associated funding provisions.

The Mills Administration is committed to supporting the growing life sciences industry in Maine. To this end, the Governor's Fiscal Year 2026-2027 biennial budget includes a \$3 million initiative to help bolster life sciences as a critical part of Maine's economy. Life sciences is a sector of Maine's economy, ripe for further investment, and while I am not here today to speak explicitly in favor of nor against the appropriation of funds outlined in the bill proposal, I would like to acknowledge the thoughtful vision represented by this initiative. The bill before you reflects upon the potential this industry has to positively shape Maine's innovation ecosystem.

The concept of a centralized entity dedicated to fostering the life sciences sector is compelling. By coordinating strategic growth, education, workforce development, and research collaboration, the proposed center reflects what could help initiate a forward-looking approach to aligning economic development with public health, environmental stewardship, and technological advancement.

Importantly, the structure of the board – with representatives from across sectors, regions, and organizational types – suggests a commitment to equity and statewide inclusion.



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The deliberate integration of institutions from rural areas like Washington and Aroostook Counties also demonstrates a recognition of the need for geographic balance in Maine's innovation economy.

The center's proposed mission of catalyzing partnerships among private industry, educational institutions, and research entities could enhance Maine's competitiveness in attracting talent, investment, and high-value jobs. The outlined goals in this bill – ranging from promoting STEM education to enabling clinical trials – suggest a holistic, long-term approach to fostering economic and societal resilience.

That said, the implementation and fiscal stewardship of such an initiative are key. If this center is established and funded, it will be essential to ensure transparent governance, rigorous performance evaluation, and alignment with existing economic development strategies. Strong oversight and regular reporting – as required by the legislation – can help ensure that public resources are used effectively and that the center delivers tangible results for Maine's residents. As you consider the creation of a new Board, particularly one with the ability to borrow and issue bonds, I urge the Committee to consider existing state entities already focused on growing Maine's economy, including the life sciences industry, such as the Maine Technology Institute and the Finance Authority of Maine.

In conclusion, while I do not take a position on the allocation of funds at this time, I respectfully submit that the ideas underlying this proposal are worthy of serious consideration and continued dialogue and could help continue our work in this important sector. Thoughtfully implemented, this center could serve as a model for how states can strategically support emerging industries that have the potential to improve health outcomes, strengthen regional economies, and build a skilled workforce.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Maine's future.