

The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Agnieszka Carpenter, Executive Director, BioME

In Support Of

L.D. 1389
An Act to Establish a Mobile Learning Lab

11 April 2023

Chair Rafferty, Chair Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Agnieszka Carpenter, I am the Executive Director of the Bioscience Association of Maine (BioME) and a resident of Gorham. I am here today to present testimony on behalf of BioME in support of LD 1389.

Bioscience Association of Maine (BioME) is a trade organization representing over 230 bioscience companies in Maine. BioME's mission is to advance economic growth and opportunities within the life sciences community in Maine by allocation equal involvement in the life sciences advocacy, education, economic development, workforce development, and attracting out-of-business.

Life sciences is one of the fastest growing industries in Maine. There are over 480 bioscience establishments currently employing 9,500 professionals in the state. The average salary for a life science employee in Maine is \$108,000 which is much higher than all other industries. Moreover, life science jobs in Maine have been growing faster than in all other New England states. In the past 5 years alone, the high paying bioscience jobs have grown by 42% (compared to 5% job growth for all other industries).

With such substantial growth, the Maine life science industry needs workforce for all sorts of positions, from manufacturing jobs to post-doctoral scientists. Maine has a unique opportunity to become a thriving biotech hub but what the industry currently lacks is appropriate career pathways for Maine students, especially in rural areas.

As the only life science industry group in the State, BioME works closely with its members and the number one issue for bioscience companies in Maine is difficulty with recruiting skilled professionals.

We believe that technically proficient talent starts with investing in students in the K-12 system. Most public schools in Maine do not have access to labs or lab equipment. This is especially true in rural areas of the State where opportunities are limited. We strongly believe that a mobile learning lab traveling from school to school would make a substantial impact on exposing young Maine learners to real life science.

Since sophisticated bio lab equipment can be expensive, outfitting every K-12 school in Maine with a science lab would pose a significant financial burden. The mobile learning lab would be a great solution as it would allow for sharing high dollar equipment across the state, bringing hands on science directly to students in the most cost-effective way.

The intention behind the Mobile Learning Bus is to have life science professionals work directly with educators to make sure that the program aligns with the current curriculum.

Our industry needs skilled workforce and we strongly believe that training workforce should begin at the K-12 level. This program would allow many students in all areas of Maine to consider life sciences as a possible career path.

For those reasons, we urge you to support LD 1389.

Sincerely,
Agnieszka Carpenter
BioME Executive Director