



The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
Testimony from Charles Wray, Vice President of Genomic Education; The Jackson Laboratory

**In Support Of**

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

11 April 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Charles Wray, I serve as Vice President of Genomic Education at The Jackson Laboratory. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of L.D. 1389, An Act to Establish a Mobile Learning Lab.

The mission of The Jackson Laboratory includes research to understand the genomic basis of human disease, the creation and worldwide distribution of mouse models for the biomedical research community, and education programs for a wide range of learners, including Maine high school students and teachers.

I am pleased to enthusiastically support LD 1389. The Mobile Learning Lab will be an important, front-end solution to enhance early educational interest and engagement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. The mobile lab effort, with support from the State of Maine, will create an important early springboard leading today's students towards in-demand STEM careers at organizations like The Jackson Laboratory.

My interest and career in the biological sciences was catalyzed in middle school through participation in STEM enrichment programs similar to learning activities that will be provided by the Mobile Learning Lab. I add my strong support today, informed by 20 years of genetics and genomics education program development, my time as a high school teacher and through 13 years of experience as a Town of Mount Desert school board member and past chair of K-8, high school and our regional school boards.

The Mobile Learning Lab will deliver engaging, participatory, and cutting-edge science and technology experiences to every county in Maine and The Jackson Laboratory is excited to join in this effort.

Through our federally-funded *Teaching the Genome Generation* program, JAX has built a network including 85 teachers in 65 Maine high schools across all 16 counties. We use shipping

trunks and FedEx to get lessons, equipment, and materials into the hands of Maine teachers at no cost to them or their school. I believe seeing a mobile lab pull up to the school will be even more exciting than our well-loved shipping crate model. We are looking forward to working with Educate Maine and Learning Undefeated to develop a mobile lab version of this signature JAX program.

A Mobile Learning Lab can readily engage 1000's of students who will subsequently be more interested in STEM coursework in high school, post-secondary degrees in biomedical fields and careers in science and technology in Maine. On behalf of The Jackson Laboratory, I urge the committee vote this bill "ought to pass."

Sincerely,

Charles G. Wray, Ph.D.  
Vice President, Genomic Education  
The Jackson Laboratory