



DATE: Feb. 1, 2022
TO: Committee on Health and Human Services
FROM: Samantha Warren, UMS Director of Government & Community Relations
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RE: **LD 1729, An Act To Assess the Feasibility of the Production of Insulin in Maine**

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: I write on behalf of the University of Maine System (UMS) to express our commitment to participating in the Commission proposed by LD 1729, *An Act To Assess the Feasibility of the Production of Insulin in Maine*.

We appreciate the recognition by Sen. Stewart and the co-sponsors of this bill of the unique capacity of UMS – and in particular at our public research university, the University of Maine – to advancing research, development and commercialization that matters to Maine.

Through the Maine Economic Improvement Fund (MEIF), the Legislature directly invests in our public university R&D activities with a return rate for our state of more than 5:1.

As this Committee heard recently from my UMaine colleague Benjamin King, through its Institute of Medicine, your flagship university is doing exciting research to advance human health and wellbeing in Maine and beyond, supported both by MEIF and the federal and private sector grants and contracts from organizations like the National Institutes of Health that initial State investment helps leverage.

This includes coordinated research with partners here in Maine like The Jackson Laboratory and MDI Biological Laboratories that we hope will lead to [new clinical therapies for people with diabetes](#), as well as with partners from across the globe into ways to lower the incidence of diabetes (hint: [it involves chocolate](#)). A biotech start-up company led by UMaine alumni that spun-off from collaborative student and faculty research on-campus is even [developing a device](#) that will aid in diagnosing aging and diabetes-related small fiber neuropathy so disease management and treatment can begin earlier.

Given these discoveries, we appreciate why the university would be central to conversations here in Maine about further efforts to control blood sugar and prevent diabetes complications. Setting aside the complexities of drug patenting and pricing, there are reasons producing safe, synthetic insulin that can secure FDA approval is incredibly difficult even for big pharmaceutical companies who spend tens of billions each year on R&D. By comparison, State investment in MEIF has been \$17.35M annually since FY16.

For these reasons, when approached about the idea of UMaine doing small-scale production of insulin, we suggested a feasibility study was a necessary first step and look forward to participating in that process if LD 1729 is enacted. In the meantime, please know the University of Maine System is committed to understanding and solving the grand health and well-being challenges of our time through partnership and innovation.

Thank you for your consideration and your support of R&D at Maine's public universities.