

June 4, 2015

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs  
c/o Office of Fiscal and Program Review  
5 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Hamper, Representative Rotundo and distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs,

My name is Jake Ward and I support research and economic development activities at the University of Maine. Please accept this written testimony as our support of:

***LD 1053 - An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Stimulate Investment in Innovation by Maine Businesses To Produce Nationally and Globally Competitive Products and Services***

I would like to complement Representative Luchini and the Co-Sponsors, for continuing the work of prior Legislatures that studied those activities that could stimulate and expand Maine's 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and designed these investments, the criteria and the evaluation process. They crafted and assembled strategies that looks at the innovation and economic development continuum by addressing research, development, innovation, commercialization, small business and economic development. Of specific interest, this bill proposes to continue the State's investment in Research, Development and Commercialization in Maine's seven technology sectors as identified and adopted in Maine's 2010 Science and Technology Action Plan. The most recent iteration of this type of investment was managed by the Maine Technology Institute in a competitive process known as the **Maine Technology Asset Fund (MTAF)**. The program was originally envisioned by the Legislature's ***Joint Select Committee on Research Development and the Innovation Economy*** during the 123<sup>rd</sup> Legislature and built on the previous work of the 117<sup>th</sup> Legislature and the findings of the ***118<sup>th</sup>'s Joint Select Committee on Research and Development***.

The MTAF program was a very unique first for the state of Maine. It created a fund and a competitive program that invested in projects that had -

- great R&D, great partnerships and collaborations, and great commercialization and economic development objectives.

It also provided the opportunity for any company, non-profit institution, university of college in the State of Maine to apply, and to apply for enough funding to have complete projects that achieved critical mass.

As you are well aware the MTAF bond funding invests in infrastructure – infrastructure that will be around for many years. This type of infrastructure will be valuable on ongoing assets, developed for specific commercialization projects but also invaluable to enable innovations that have yet to be invented.

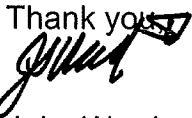
This program invests not only in infrastructure and tools, but in the in the competitive drive, the competitive motivation and the competitive vision of how innovation will help Maine's changing economy. This is a culture we want to promote and to which we want to expose our young students and entrepreneurs. The world economy is very competitive, and we must instill that sense of competition.

Those projects funded at UMaine are in various stages of development, some just completing construction while others are online. Dozens of projects are underway in fields such as renewable energy, composites, bridges, biofuels, pulp and paper, aquaculture, virtual reality software, wireless communications, nanotechnology and sensors, etc.. All are with Maine company partners with a drive toward commercialization and economic development in Maine. Early results have shown the first stages of ROI – leveraging additional R&D dollars, new patent pending technologies and field testing of prototypes. We have to get through those stages that will get these companies growing and expanding.

The State investment has given us the facilities and tools to be competitive. The increase in competitiveness has been documented by the National Science Foundation which ranks Maine University R&D having the greatest growth in the nation, a growth of 93% from 2001-2011 (latest available data). Our projects are designed to support Maine companies, providing access and support for commercialization. All our projects offer great opportunities for students. All of the University of Maine projects result in public infrastructure that will be available for years to come.

The opportunity to invest is large, and this continues to be a challenge for Maine. The promise of this program is that any amount of funding will be invested in the best opportunities to create impact and not spread thinly.

In closing, I thank the Legislature, the Administration and the Voters of Maine for supporting the education and the R&D environment and helping the culture of innovation grow in Maine. This is the future of Maine.

Thank you  
  
Jake Ward

# Industry R&D Partnerships FY2010-2014

