Bioscience Association of Maine

LD 1643, an Act to Establish the Maine Life Science Innovation Center: Talking Points

Theme 1: Why Maine, Why Now

Strong Foundation

- Maine's life sciences sector includes 587 organizations supporting over 9,500 jobs statewide.
- The sector contributed $2.3 billion to Maine's Gross Regional Product in 2023, with average salaries 63% higher than the state average.
- R&D institutions across the state are fueling commercialization and industry partnerships – across health, ocean, agriculture, and forestry.
- BioME's report shows Maine's life sciences industry has grown by 31% in employment since 2018, well above the national average.

Built on Natural Strengths

- Life sciences are helping Maine reimagine its heritage sectors, like farming, fishing, and forestry, through innovations in sustainable food systems, aquaculture, and biomaterials.
- Maine's natural resources, from cold clean waters to farm fields and forests, are a strategic advantage in fields like marine biotechnology and biobased product development.
- New ventures, like seaweed-based packaging, fish health diagnostics, and forest-based health products, are emerging at the intersection of research and tradition.
- This aligns with Maine's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy, which prioritizes innovation that leverages Maine's natural assets and local strengths.

A Unique Opportunity

- Maine is one of few states where health innovation and environmental innovation are deeply linked, enabling breakthroughs in ocean-based health, regenerative agriculture, and climate resilience.
- The Blue Economy Task Force Report (2025) and Maine Won't Wait Climate Plan both call for life sciences-driven solutions to climate and ocean challenges.
- Maine's growing data science and biotechnology enhances our global competitiveness.
- By nurturing this distinctive convergence, Maine can lead in next-generation sectors like marine pharmaceuticals, precision nutrition, and biomanufacturing.

Momentum Requires Investment

- All net new job creation in the U.S. comes from startups, typically companies five years old or less. Life sciences are a prime engine for this kind of growth.
- Strategic investment now will allow Maine to retain talent, attract national grants, and compete with faster-moving states in our region, like Rhode Island, Connecticut and New Hampshire.

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- States that invested early, like Massachusetts with its $1B Life Sciences Initiative, now dominate in NIH grants, venture capital, and job creation.
- Maine's Innovation Economy Action Plan (2023) explicitly recommends investments in life sciences to accelerate commercialization, workforce development, and R&D.

Theme 2: What the Life Science Center Will Do

Align & Accelerate Growth

- Serve as Maine's central life sciences hub, aligning funding, policy, and partnerships across sectors.
- Advance infrastructure, workforce, and research capacity to implement Maine's strategic goals.
- Identify gaps, track progress, and inform policy using real-time data and performance metrics.
- Bridge silos across government, academia, and industry to move Maine forward as one.

Support Startups & Innovation

- Provide early-stage capital, lab access, and technical support to help innovators bring ideas to market.
- Offer mentorship and business development resources to help startups grow and scale.
- Expand access to flexible wet lab space and shared R&D facilities across the state.
- Help companies navigate regulatory, technical, and market-entry challenges.

Build Talent & Inclusion

- Align workforce training programs with actual industry needs in health, marine, and biomanufacturing.
- Partner with schools and workforce boards to expand inclusive STEM career pathways statewide.
- Develop credentialing and upskilling opportunities to fill talent gaps.
- Retain talent by creating clear, visible career pathways in life sciences.

Strengthen Maine's Competitive Edge

- Position Maine to secure federal and philanthropic investment by coordinating grant-readiness efforts.
- Raise Maine's national visibility as a hub for health and resource-based life sciences.
- Leverage public-private partnerships to attract capital and grow capacity.
- Ensure sustained impact through strategy, performance metrics, and long-term leadership.

Theme 3: Why the Center Must Be Independent

Life Sciences Require Specialized Coordination

- Life sciences span multiple sectors – health, oceans, biotech, data, and agriculture – demanding a dedicated, cross-cutting approach.
- The sector requires infrastructure, regulatory support, and talent strategies that general-purpose agencies weren't designed to manage.
- A focused center ensures alignment with Maine's broader goals in health, climate, and economic development.

Existing Infrastructure Is Strong but Lacks Strategic Alignment

- Maine's agencies are effective and important, but none are mandated or structured to lead life sciences strategy across the full spectrum of needs.
- Life sciences touch nearly every other innovation sector but require focused leadership, not fragmented support.
- The Center will work in close partnership with existing entities to coordinate rather than duplicate efforts.

Dedicated Centers Deliver Results

- Massachusetts' Life Sciences Center has leveraged $700M in state funds to draw over $1B in outside investment.
- North Carolina's Biotechnology Center helped build a sector contributing $86B annually, with 100,000+ jobs.
- These are not duplicative structures. They are high-return investments that fuel statewide economic growth.

Speed and Efficiency

- Without focus, Maine risks losing federal grants, talent, and companies to faster-moving states.
- The Center would allow Maine to move with speed, strategy, and competitiveness.
- A small upfront investment now avoids fragmented spending and lost opportunities down the line.

Theme 4: A Smart, Accountable Investment and Why It Must Happen Now

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Transparent and Responsible by Design

- The Center will be governed by a board of public, private, and academic leaders to ensure oversight and accountability.
- Annual public reporting will track investment outcomes, performance, and alignment with Maine's strategic plans.
- All programs will be tied to clear goals, so legislators and taxpayers know what they're funding and what they'll get.

Strategic Use of Limited State Dollars

- The Governor's budget includes $3 million to accelerate life sciences, a modest but catalytic investment.
- This mirrors national models: Rhode Island invested $45M to launch its hub; Massachusetts $1B.
- Maine's investment is smaller but timely and will be structured to maximize impact.

Big Returns with Proven Precedent

- Maine's sector already delivers: $2.3B in GRP and 31% job growth in the past five years.
- In North Carolina, a state-backed center achieved a 73:1 return on investment.
- The Center will be charged with leveraging state funds to bring in major private, federal, and philanthropic dollars.

The Cost of Waiting Is Too High

- Every year of delay means missed grants, lost talent, and fewer startups launched here in Maine.
- Maine risks falling behind neighboring states that are already investing.
- This is the moment to act – with structure, strategy, and a long-term vision.