

Daniel Jenkins
Brunswick / USM
LD 512

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, My name is Dr. Daniel Jenkins and I am a Full Professor of Leadership & Organizational Studies at the University of Southern Maine. I also have a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration and have worked in the Florida legislature, in academic administration at the University of South Florida, and as a town councilor in Brunswick, Maine. I am here to testify in support of LD 512, An Act to Promote Student Enrollment and Degree Completion in the University of Maine System by Providing Tuition Waivers to Eligible Students. I have been working in higher education since 2007 and have many observations that lead me to support this legislation. As you are aware, the State of Maine is currently experiencing a decrease in enrollment in our public universities, and this has resulted in competition with community colleges that currently offer free tuition in Maine. In order to remain competitive and attract students, we need to take action to make higher education more affordable and accessible for all.

The proposed tuition waiver would provide a much-needed solution to this issue by offering free tuition to all qualifying students in our public universities. This would not only make higher education more accessible to low-income families but also help to keep our talented students in Maine. Many students who are accepted into Maine's public universities ultimately end up attending community colleges instead because of the lower cost of tuition. By offering a tuition waiver, we can encourage more students to choose our public universities and ensure that we retain our best and brightest.

In addition, offering a tuition waiver will also have positive economic effects on our state. When more students attend our public universities, they are more likely to stay in Maine after graduation and contribute to our local economy. These students are also more likely to start businesses, create jobs, and innovate, leading to a more prosperous future for Maine.

Therefore, I urge you to support the proposed tuition waiver for students in our public universities in Maine. This will not only benefit our students and our state but also demonstrate our commitment to making higher education accessible to all.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dan Jenkins, Ph.D.