

Laura Mitchell  
Orono  
LD 512

Dear Education and Cultural Affairs Committee.

My name is Laura Mitchell and I am a resident of Orono, ME, a University of Maine undergraduate and graduate degree alumni. I spent part of my childhood growing up in Orono and had family that worked for the University of Maine.

I am writing in support of LD512, An Act to Promote Student Enrollment and Degree Completion in the University of Maine System by Providing Tuition Waivers to Eligible Students.

Attending university was a challenge when I graduated high school because it required taking out loans, and these limited my options in terms of what jobs I could take afterward as I had loan payments. My BS was a critical stepping stone for future success. Today, I worry that attending University has just gotten so much farther out of reach financially for today's youth and Maine desperately needs this young, educated workforce to maintain our economy.

In most of Maine, the only age group of our population that is growing is 65+. As they retire, we need a highly educated workforce to replace them. Attending university is a critical step in building that pipeline of workers.

With Community Colleges continuing to provide tuition waivers, the market of youth that are seeking a university education should be provided that same benefit when eligible based on LD512.

As an Orono resident, I also see the outsized impact the University of Maine has on a huge surrounding area's economy, culture, and workforce. We need to support our public universities as they are not only vital lifelines for our workforce, but vital lifeblood to the communities they are in.

Investing in education is an investment in our future, particularly when we are investing in our own Maine youth.

Please support LD512.  
Thank you.