

Dear Education and Cultural Affairs Committee Members,

My name is Lily Sage and I am a 2018 graduate of the Maine School of Science and Mathematics. I am writing to ask for your support for LD1458 - An Act to Increase Funding for the Maine School of Science and Mathematics.

MSSM has received flat funding for the past six years, which effectively means its budget has diminished in real value given inflation. The effects of this— the elimination of positions, slowing of wage growth, and reductions in student services— are deeply disappointing outcomes of the flat funding model and should be seen as an embarrassment to the state. This is a magnet school for Maine's highest-achieving students, and as such, is a flagship institution that our state should be proud of. U.S. News and World Reports certainly thinks so, at least, having ranked MSSM the #2 public high school in the country in 2019, but at a state level it feels as though there has never been enough political willpower to value and accordingly fund this school as the impressive statewide resource it is.

LD1458 will help restore MSSM's funding to an adequate (read: less shamefully low) level. It will also help ensure that students from less privileged backgrounds can afford to attend MSSM and are not discouraged from applying to the school because of its steep sticker price for room and board. As a student who received financial aid to attend MSSM for four years, I cannot overstate how grateful I am for the excellent education and incredible opportunities this school provided me with.

At MSSM I achieved things I never could have done at my sending school. I took advanced classes I otherwise never would have had access to and felt myself finally challenged again after waiting *years* to experience academic rigor in school. I learned from brilliant faculty members, formed lifelong friendships with peers, accessed a wide range of academic and extracurricular experiences, and received an education that eventually propelled me to Bowdoin College on a full scholarship. Without MSSM, I don't know if I would have stayed in Maine for college, let alone after college. But attending MSSM instilled in me a sense of pride for my home state and now I hope that I can live out the rest of my life here in Maine.

I want more young Mainers to access the wonderful educational opportunities that MSSM provided me with, and I want them to do so without having to worry about the cost of room and board, or about their school's meager operating budget. MSSM is an essential resource for Maine's gifted students, and they, like all students, deserve a sufficiently-funded school. Ensuring that MSSM receives adequate funding rests on you, our state legislators, so I thank you for your consideration of this bill and sincerely hope that I can count on your support for LD1458.

Lily Sage
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