

April 24, 2023

Chairman Rafferty, Chairman Brennan, Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Alan Cobo-Lewis. I live in Orono. I am testifying for **LD 1656** An Act to Allow Student Representation Within the Governance of the University of Maine System.

While I am testifying in my personal capacity, my testimony is informed by my long experience in higher education: four years as an undergraduate at a private institution of higher education, four more as a graduate student at a public institution of higher education, a year as a post-doc at a private institution of higher education, five as a faculty member of a private institution of higher education, and 25 as a faculty member of a public institution of higher education—the University of Maine.

LD 1656 is intriguing. While perhaps the most obvious aspect is the sheer number of student representatives it proposes for the Board of Trustees. I leave discussion about the appropriate number to other parties. But there are two other crucial aspects of the bill that I would like to highlight and call out for support:

Specific Constituencies

The bill recognizes that grad students and undergraduate students have different perspectives and needs on the University of Maine System, and it appropriately designates separate student representatives from those constituencies. This is an excellent idea, and I hope the Committee endorses it.

Election

The bill proposes that student representatives be chosen by student election. I strongly support democracy, and I endorse this aspect of the bill as well. Elections keep all of you in touch with your constituents, and elections hold the promise of keeping the student representatives in touch with their constituents.