

Sen. Rafferty, Rep. Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs committee. My name is Scott Cuddy and I live in Winterport. I'm here today to ask you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1458, An Act to Increase Funding to the Maine School of Science and Mathematics.

My oldest son, Ellis, is a freshman this year at MSSM. Ellis's grades at Wagner Middle School in Winterport were excellent but easily achieved and he was routinely bored by his days there. Even participating in the Gifted and Talented program offered very little relief from that boredom. His teachers did the best for him that they could, but it's hard to rationalize giving extra help to the kid who immediately gets every concept you're trying to teach him while not having the time to give that extra help to kids who are struggling with those same concepts. Ellis and kids like him needed a school that did things differently.

At MSSM the academic rigor challenges Ellis every day. The easy A's he used to get have become hard earned A's and B's. He's studying multiple hours a day outside of class to maintain his grades and his knowledge base shows it. It's hard not to take up all of my time telling you all of how proud I am of his achievements and the way he's responded to his new challenges, but that's not why I'm here today.

MSSM has been working hard to support Maine kids, but Maine hasn't supported MSSM. The school has been flat funded since 2017. For reference, in my home district, RSU 22, our budget has gone from roughly \$30,000,000 to just over \$36,600,000 since 2017. This is an increase of nearly 22% in seven years. That's slightly below CPI over the same time<sup>1</sup>. During those years MSSM has seen an increase of \$0. In essence, MSSM has lost  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the spending power they had. Much of the increase for RSU 22 came from the State as well, not just local property tax payers. To be clear, I'm delighted that RSU 22 has received this kind of funding from the state, I just want to see MSSM receive it's fair share of that support.

In my second term in the legislature, we passed a bipartisan budget that finally met the goal of the state supporting 55% of General Purpose Aid to Education. This was achieved in bi-partisan fashion. The year-over-year increase in GPA was about \$87,000,000, or roughly 7%. Again MSSM received no increase.

Because of the flat funding, employee pay hasn't kept pace with CPI. Positions have been eliminated. How much belt tightening can this school be expected to do? We're used to hearing stories of teachers doing more and more while being grossly underpaid. But in those districts budgets have gone up! At MSSM everyone is doing more with no budget increase at all.

My son is thriving at MSSM. The school is utterly unique in Maine and offers an unparalleled opportunity for our students. The school has fought it's way to this point and it deserves our support. I hope that you'll support the students, staff, and faculty of the Maine School of Science and Mathematics by voting Ought to Pass on LD 1458. Thank you for your time and attention and I welcome any questions you might have of me.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/2017?amount=1>

