

Educational and Cultural Affairs Committee

Testimony in FAVOR of LD 1458 - An Act to Increase Funding for the Maine School of Science and Mathematics

Douglas Baston, Gardiner

My name is Doug Baston, I live in Gardiner, and I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 1458 - An Act to Increase Funding for the Maine School of Science and Mathematics.

In 2000, my son transferred from Wiscasset High School to MSSM as a junior. There he met his future wife, of Bucksport. They both graduated in 2002 and went to colleges that they would not have aspired to had they not been challenged by the standards of academic excellence set by our nationally recognized magnet school. They have gone on to successful careers as a software engineer and an actuary.

To partially repay the debt my family owes to MSSM, and the taxpayers of Maine who support it, I have served on the school's fund-raising board, the MSSM Foundation, continuously for almost twenty years.

In that time I've seen firsthand how the MSSM experience has changed the lives of countless other Maine children. The most poignant stories are those of kids who came from our poorer and more isolated small towns and through the MSSM experience saw that they could do great things – the kid from Eastport who is now a senior software engineer at Google; the kid from rural Somerset County who now manages a family wealth fund; the child of millworkers who became a Rhodes Scholar, and countless others.

I am a fervent believer in public schools, because in our increasingly siloed society they are the socializing institution of a healthy democracy. They put kids from all sorts of social and economic backgrounds together and help them learn from each other, work with each other, and succeed with each other – thereby becoming better citizens.

MSSM is a crown jewel in our public education system. The kids who go there not only go on to great success, but they also form life-long friendships and become better and more active citizens: witness Sen. Nichole Grohoski. The school deserves the financial support it needs to ensure that every Maine child who has the ability, the work ethic, and the desire to go there can do so.

Please vote Yes on LD 1458.

Thank you.