

April 22, 2023

Dear Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

As a parent of a current MSSM student, I am writing to urge you to pass LD1458 through the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. It is hard to express how important MSSM (Maine School of Science and Mathematics) has been to my child Peter.

MSSM has been a transformative experience for Peter, one he could not have received at his sending school and one which he desperately needed. I am a passionate advocate of local public schools. I have joyfully taught in them most of my career, even when I have had the choice to teach in private or non-traditional settings. I support my local public school system enthusiastically. The education Peter received in our economically challenged town surpassed (in my opinion) the education children receive at the private schools in our area.

But I was also grateful that when the time came for him to go to high school, he had the choice to attend MSSM. MSSM has given him something our small high school could not - a peer group. This peer group, fostered by extraordinary teachers and staff, is the "transformative" magic that happens at MSSM. At Waterville High School, Peter would likely have been the only student who created his own language for fun or dreamed in math equations. At MSSM, he is secure in who he is and is surrounded by like-minded peers, which led him to achieve academically: he is a National Merit Scholar, served as the Maine Youth in Government Governor for 2021-22, and will attend Rice University, a highly selective university that accepts fewer than 10% of applicants. He achieved these things because he thrived emotionally and socially at MSSM.

The Maine legislature had the foresight to understand the needs of students like Peter well before educators talked much about Gifted and Talented or about Social Emotional Learning. Now we have a fuller understanding of these fields, in addition to our understanding of the role STEM will play in Maine's future. I hope that understanding gives the legislature the vision to truly support MSSM so it can continue to thrive, and continue to help students like Peter thrive.

If I could vote for an increase of funding for MSSM, I would - just as I have voted to increase the budget at my local school. But MSSM is funded by the state, and so I turn to you for help. Please support LD1458 and support MSSM!

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