

MAINE MARITIME ACADEMY

A College of Engineering, Management, Science, and Transportation

Testimony Before the Joint Committee of Education and Cultural Affairs

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Captain Mark Winter, Commandant of the Regiment of Midshipmen Maine Maritime Academy

Good afternoon. My name is Captain Mark Winter. I am the Commandant of Midshipmen at Maine Maritime Academy. I am a proud 1988 graduate of the Academy, and I am thankful for the opportunity to testify and describe to you what a jewel Maine Maritime is for the state of Maine.

First and foremost, let me say thank you for everything the Legislature has done so far to help to begin to bring Maine Maritime Academy back on equal footing with the other state colleges and universities in Maine. But we still have a long way to go.

Many of Maine Maritime Academy's graduates earn their degrees in programs that also lead to a U.S. Coast Guard license. This license allows them to work at sea. Our students routinely receive job offers that exceed \$100,000 per year. Those graduates immediately contribute to Maine's economic development, workforce development and tax revenue.

While Maine Maritime Academy does receive some federal funding, just like any other state college or university, such as federal financial aid programs, the Academy does not receive any federal funding for the cost of operating the college.

The current training ship, the TS STATE OF MAINE, as well as the new training ship that is due within the next year, are owned by the federal government, but the expense of maintaining and operating these vessels falls primarily to the academy.

The other state colleges and universities in Maine, having enrollment within +/- 50% of MMA's, receive an average of over 49% of their annual operational budgets from the State. Maine Maritime Academy, however, receives only 24%. That is more than 25% below the other state-owned higher education institutions in Maine.

Maine Maritime Academy receives the lowest amount of its operating budget from the state, as compared to any other state college or university in Maine. An increase in base budget funding to MMA would put Maine Maritime Academy at the same competitive advantage as Maine's other institutions of higher education.

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Maine Maritime Academy's tuition is among the highest in the state for state schools. Only the University of Maine at Orono is more expensive. The average percentage of operating budget paid by students in tuition and fees among all other Maine colleges is approximately 22%. MMA is forced to charge tuition and fees at a rate of 50%.

Tuition for an in-state student at Maine Maritime this fall was \$11,474. At Orono, the tuition was \$12,000. At the University of Southern Maine, it was \$8,910; at the University of Maine at Machias, it was \$8,700 (with some students qualifying for a free first year); and at Eastern Maine Community College it was \$1,536, with many students having that entirely covered by the state.

In addition to tuition, Maine Maritime Academy students must pay approximately \$7,900 a year in Regimental Fees, which cover some of the overhead costs associated with the licensing programs. Additionally, there is a Cruise Fee of \$1800 paid during the first year and third years to cover some of the costs of the training cruise. Finally, Regimental students must pay \$3500 to \$5000 over four years for uniforms and associated upkeep.

Why do we talk about MMA needing greater state assistance with operational costs? Because, unlike most of the other state colleges and universities, Maine Maritime Academy has significantly higher overhead costs. In a traditional college setting, most of the learning is done in a classroom with a professor. There may be some labs, but most of those are minor as compared to what is available to students at Maine Maritime Academy.

In addition to the training ship, which allows 50% of the student body to get practical, hands-on experience in their future career field, while experiencing at least two semesters at sea, Maine Maritime has over 20 small vessels on a robust waterfront, that give students the opportunity to learn navigation, ship and boat handling, seamanship, and marine engineering. These include the 76-foot tug PENTAGOET, used for tug and barge training, and the schooner BOWDOIN, the Official Vessel of the State of Maine, and the flagship of Maine Maritime Academy's Vessel Operations and Technology program.

Add to that the welding and machine tool labs, full size marine diesel engines that allow let students learn how to operate and maintain complex propulsion and generator systems, two full size navigation simulators that, except for the rocking of the vessel, completely simulate operations on the bridge of a full-size commercial vessel.

These are the expensive tools of learning the maritime trade. But it is these tools that allow 95% of Maine Maritime Academy graduates to be hired within 90 days of graduation. The highest rate of any college in Maine.

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Unfortunately, the high tuition and additional costs of the unique program and education that Maine Maritime Academy offers is becoming unaffordable for many Maine students. Maine Maritime Academy is now losing students to Massachusetts Maritime Academy because it is cheaper for a Maine resident to go to Mass Maritime than it is for that same student to go in-state to Maine Maritime. This is due in part to the fact that Mass Maritime Academy receives a significantly larger share of its operating budget from the state than Maine Maritime Academy does.

In closing, for Maine Maritime Academy to remain competitive, both with the other schools in the UMaine and Community College systems, as well as with the other state maritime academies, it needs to receive funding from the state that is in parity with peer higher education systems. This will allow Maine Maritime to continue to produce graduates who can immediately begin returning that investment back to Maine. We ask for your support in helping to maintain this important part of Maine's maritime heritage. Thank you.