

Testimony in Support of LD 2092

Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

Good morning, my name is Rowan Kristan, and I am a first-class midshipman, otherwise known as a senior, at Maine Maritime Academy. I am studying and training to be an unlimited tonnage licensed deck officer with a minor in International Business and Logistics. Growing up in the coastal town of Boothbay Harbor I was raised on the water, working at marinas and boatyards. Despite the small population my hometown has a strong community of MMA alumni, which sparked my interest in a career at sea. I began to seriously look at furthering my education through a state maritime academy.

Yet there was a daunting reality I had to remember, the cost of education. I knew that whatever post-high school academic program I chose would fall to me to make happen. Because of this I was unsure if I would ever pursue a post-secondary education. I continued to work every summer and weekends during school whenever possible, saving up every dollar I could.

Throughout high school I knew I wanted to work with my hands while developing myself as a professional in a valuable field. As several of my friends in high school chose Maine Maritime, I wanted to apply. Hearing about the opportunities to work at sea with a well-paying job while being able to return home to Maine is a life changing opportunity. In a competitive job market, thinking about how quickly I could find employment was another reason for attending Maine Maritime. A campus with a top tier bridge simulator, 500-No foot training ship, chemical tanker simulator and real marine diesel engine labs, I knew that MMA would give me the best training. I heard about all the specialized programs like Yacht Club where students trained on different small craft just to better their seamanship skills. Going out on weekends to islands nearby and exploring demonstrated the mariner mindset of going out into the unknown and returning safely from a mission.

Senior year of high school came around and I had to make some big decisions. Applying to Maine Maritime and Massachusetts Maritime I was set on the boat school idea. Upon acceptance I had yet another decision to make. Massachusetts offered a \$25,000 dollar scholarship based on need and GPA, making Mass cheaper for me, but I wanted the best training I could get. After talking with the financial aid department at Maine Maritime I was able to find a few scholarships that would inevitably be the deciding factor. I am tremendously grateful for the opportunity to continue my education in Maine while opening doors across the world. Affording me a career where I can impact global trade while staying in my home state of Maine.

Now in my last semester I am seriously weighing my options for employment after school. Most of my friends at other schools are applying to jobs and hoping to get a response, but I am in a different boat. Throughout my sailing experiences, career fairs, and even meeting people at the gym I have received so many job offers I need a

spreadsheet to track everything. With offers paying over \$130,000 I feel secure about my future and ability to afford life in Maine.

And yet there is another avenue I will be taking along with shipping out, pursuing a master's in international business and logistics through Maine Maritime's grad school. Having always had a draw to the business world I know I will return shoreside after sailing while providing boots on the ground experience, adding value to companies that move the world. Because of the opportunities afforded me by MMA, I can take my life to the next level with a purpose.

Please support increased funding for MMA to help give other students like me this experience. Thank you.