

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and other members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, and

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and other esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Julie Gosse, I am an Associate Professor at UMaine, a member of AFUM, and a resident of Orono.

I am here to testify neither for nor against the Governor's proposed budget. I am here to ask the Legislature to find ways to increase the funding to the UMaine system higher than the proposed 4%, so that we can help our students succeed.

My focus today is on the flagship of UMS, UMaine.

- I have plotted the Maine state legislative appropriations to UMaine over time, inflation-adjusted and divided by total students. Strikingly, real appropriations per student have decreased ~40% since the 1990s, a downward straight line with an  $R^2$  fit of 94%. The graph is in my submitted testimony. If the trend continues, within another 35 years the state appropriation to UMaine will be zero dollars and the University will be fully privatized, or defunct.

- These data indicate that any increases in state appropriations have been lower than inflation and have not kept pace with enrollment. We appreciate the increases over the past 2 years, but we are still 40% too low, equivalent to a \$60 million budget hole each year<sup>2</sup>.

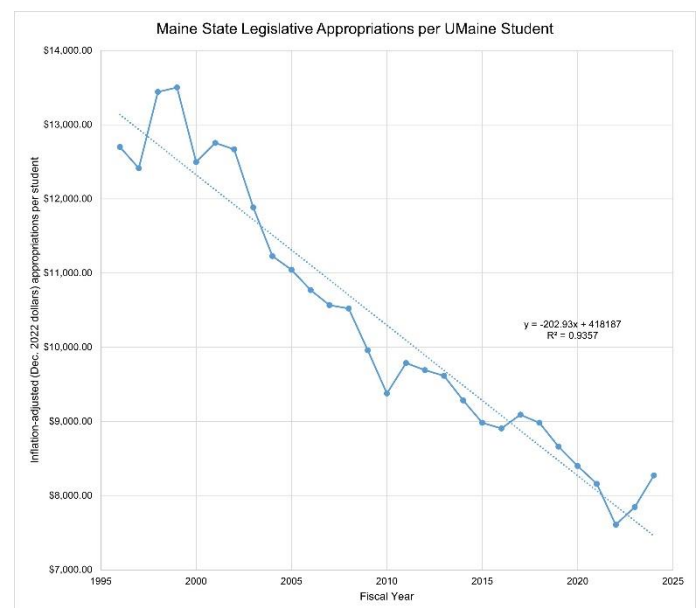
- This sustained, decades-long appropriations decline:

- is accumulating damage—each year a professor is not hired, that's

- fewer external grant dollars being brought into Maine,
- fewer students trained in research which provides the essential work experience that students need to get a job or get admitted into medical school, and

- fewer course offerings for students. These budget cuts have resulted in a 25% decline in numbers of professors since before the Great Recession, despite equivalent enrollment.

- Each year maintenance is deferred, costs of fixing later go up. Students and staff experience this funding gap every day. Major infrastructure problems (broken A/C in summer making research labs 90° though we need to keep working on federally-funded research, mold, cockroaches. Pipes leaking steam that destroyed a million dollar microscope needed for millions in federal research dollars—necessitating the use of blue tarp over its replacement as if at a campsite, inside the lab).



<sup>1</sup>Enrollment data was obtained from UMaine's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and reflects total enrollment without duplicates, both undergraduate and graduate students. Calculator of inflation, adjusted to Dec 2022 dollars, was <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>. State appropriation (E&G) data are from UMS Finance and Administration. Note in the first 3 years of this data series, UMaine was combined with about 2000 students/yr at Bangor Community College. Starting with the FY22 data, the UMaine-Machias budget and number of students are included in the figures due to the merger of those two institutions. These values are state appropriation for E&G and does not count other sources of state revenue like MEIF, but E&G is by far the largest source of funding from the state.

<sup>2</sup>We are \$60 million in the hole each year (=11,760 students \*\$5230 deficit compared to '90s)

<sup>3</sup>between required BS, PhD, and postdoctoral training

<sup>4</sup> data are from 2018-2023; [https://biomaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2024-BIOME-SOTI\\_Digital-1.pdf](https://biomaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2024-BIOME-SOTI_Digital-1.pdf)

- Other indicators of the underfunding include a 25% cut to graduate student teaching assistants' pay. Difficulty hiring custodial staff at the low wages offered, so basic maintenance sometimes goes undone. Salaries offered to incoming professors, positions which require a minimum of 12 years of intensive, year-round higher education<sup>3</sup>, are so low that it took 2 ½ years searching to hire one person; many who turned us down told us they had been offered \$20k+ per year more salary and hundreds of thousands of dollars more in research startup funds at peer public institutions.
- At UMaine, we work hard to elevate students into good jobs where they make a positive difference in people's lives and earn a good wage. We do research that improves human health. Nearly 100% of our graduates have found successful placement in the biomedical sciences and healthcare fields, which are well-compensated. In fact, biotech jobs in Maine grew by 31% in the past 5 years<sup>4</sup>, far higher growth than other sectors. These industries rely on UMaine to train the workers they need to fuel economic growth.
- Thank for your time and consideration of this request for increased funding to the UMaine system. While the proposed 4% increase is a good starting place, it is not enough to remedy these problems and stem the decline.

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