

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

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

My name is Sara Abronze, and I work at the University of Southern Maine as a Grants and Contracts Technology Manager. I live in Sandford, Maine, and work in Portland, Maine.

I am here today to testify neither for nor against the Governor's proposed budget. I appreciate the Governor's proposal to increase the state appropriation to the University of Maine System but sadly this is not enough to make up recent inflation and the current revenue picture for our state's university system. We hope the Legislature will work with us to improve the Governor's proposal by finding more ways for the state to provide more funding for the UMaine System and to make sure these funds are targeted directly to our campuses (and as close to our students as possible).

I've worked at the University of Southern Maine for seventeen years, and I have seen some departments get cut, staff members laid off, and faculty retrenched. USM specifically has been reorganizing and cutting costs annually since I started employment in 2007. However, USM is now at the point where there is no fat left to trim in our budget. Every employee at USM has done their part to keep expenses low, but we are still struggling to keep up with the inflation of expenses and static tuition revenue. Without additional funding from the state, I fear that layoff notices will continue to increase in frequency, and that is just bad business for Maine. Continued layoffs will negatively impact students, families, and the university's reputation. In addition, employees rely on the ability to provide their families with the salaries they receive from the University of Maine System. More layoffs within the University of Maine system will mean the state will receive less in taxes. Plus, the University of Maine System offers a lot of economic and social benefits to the state of Maine. Please consider funding Maine's future by increasing the state's appropriation to the University of Maine System.