

Morgan Witham
Deer Isle
LD 787

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Morgan Witham, and I am a proud graduate of MSSM's Class of 1998. I write in strong support of LD787 and LD1011.

MSSM was founded as an investment in students whose academic needs exceed the traditional public school curriculum. Just as we ensure students with learning challenges receive appropriate support, we must also meet the needs of students with exceptional academic abilities. MSSM fulfills this obligation, and I am living proof of its impact.

After MSSM, I earned a BA in Theater and pursued graduate studies in American and New England Studies. Over the past decade, I have served my hometowns of Deer Isle-Stonington in roles including Title I Math Interventionist, Gifted & Talented Teacher, Performing Arts Center Director, and school Librarian.

Today, as Director of Deer Isle Adult and Community Education, I work at the local, regional and state levels to build educational and workforce training programs that strengthen our coastal communities, particularly as our lobstering industry faces profound changes. Last year working with the Town of Stonington, Haystack Mountain School of the Arts, and the Island Institute, we secured a \$1.75M Maine Connectivity Authority grant to create a Stonington Connectivity Hub, supporting digital literacy, workforce development, and telehealth initiatives. The Adult Education Program is the anchor institution for the hub, which repurposes portions of the old Stonington Elementary School into an Adult Learning Center. We regularly meet with other C-Hub grant fundees, in St. George and Farmington to learn from one another's models, because we are innovating as we go.

MSSM ignited my passion for learning, challenged me to build academic stamina, and expanded my understanding of Maine as a whole. "Gifted" students do not develop a work ethic or emotional resilience without being challenged—and MSSM provides that challenge in a way no other institution in the state can.

Living and working with students from all over the state broadened and deepened my understanding of Maine in ways that are really paying off now. The fact that the state created a school I really needed, just when I really needed it- made me enduringly grateful.

I urge you to support these bills. Financial challenges are real, but investing in MSSM is an investment in Maine's future leaders and problem-solvers. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Morgan Witham