

March 26, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Dana Polojärvi, and I am testifying on my own personal time in strong support of LD 681, An Act Regarding Higher Education Funding in the State. Please work to pass and fund this important investment into Maine Maritime Academy.

I have worked at Maine Maritime Academy (MMA) for about 20 years as a professor. Due to lack of funding, MMA has been faced with many issues with providing adequate and competitive wage increases. To share some of the realities we all are facing, wages are so bad at MMA that:

- I worry I will never be able to retire.
- I worry new colleagues will never be able to afford a home, since costs of housing on near the coast have skyrocketed.
- I worry we won't be able to hire new colleagues since virtually every other school of our rank pays better.
- At this point my salary has actually declined for at least the last three years. We are approximately 15% below the changes in cost of living since the 2021-2022 school year alone.

I ask that the members of this committee work to not only pass this bill, but work to resolve the root of these funding challenges sooner than later. Otherwise, Maine's institutions like MMA will be forced to navigate rougher seas than we are in now. More damage will be done, and the cost of repairs will compound.

Thanks to the committee for reading this testimony.

Dana Polojärvi