

Flynn Ross
Westbrook
LD 1219

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

My name is Dr. Flynn Ross. I am Professor and Chair of the Teacher Education Department at the University of Southern Maine and live in Westbrook. I am here today to testify in support of LD 1219, An Act to Increase State Funding for the Campuses of the University of Maine System and to Raise the Minimum Hourly Wage for Employees of the System.

I have seen over the 26 years I have worked at USM, the number of faculty in our department cut in half despite having the same number of students in more programs. Our support staff is less than half of what it was when I began in 1999 with less than one full time administrative assistant serving four tenure track and two lecturer faculty serving over 200 graduate and undergraduate students.

My office is on the fifth floor of Bailey Hall which has a fabulous view of Mt. Washington to the ocean. Only the roof leaks every rainstorm and when the snow melts so we have water catchment systems into trash barrels throughout the office space.

This year we will hold our program completion ceremony for over 100 newly certified teachers at Gorham Middle School Auditorium. Thank you to Gorham Schools who have graciously offered the space because our Office of Educator Preparation has no budget to rent the auditorium on campus with set up, clean up, staffing, and lighting fees.

We have lost faculty to other universities where they are paid \$20,000 more for less work, our support staff cycle through for higher paying positions, and our alumni with masters degrees earn less than my daughters with high school diplomas working in hospitals and restaurants. Our alumni in teacher education educate Maine's citizens and future workforce. Please help us help them.