

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee— my name is Cassidy Rose Munley, and I work at the University of Southern Maine's Portland Campus as an administrative assistant to the STEM Outreach program. I live in Biddeford. 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. The work that I do directly enriches the lives of communities all over Maine. I am extremely fortunate to be able to see the impact we make first hand. The youth that STEM Outreach works with are not shy about how life-changing our programs and camps can be for them— we see many of our campers go on to be our staff, providing the mentorship that they received to a brand new crop of brilliant, eager STEM students. What our University System does for the whole state does not stop with those who attend and teach classes and programs. The ripple effect of what these institutions do touches every Mainer, every day. I made Maine my home in 2022, and since then, I have only felt support and belonging. A huge factor in this is the sense of community established by the efforts of every school in the University System. The tireless work of the staff, faculty, and administration of each of our systems' universities does not go unnoticed, but does often go underappreciated. Many of us, especially staff members, struggle to make ends meet; many of my colleagues live paycheck to paycheck, but make it work in order to continue to do work that they are passionate about. It is true that we must all sometimes make sacrifices in order to see our passions to fruition— but that does not mean that working to do what we love should come at the cost of our wellbeing. The drive I have to support our students, from our campers all the way to our grad students on campus, keeps me passionate enough to fight for what is right for not just myself, but for the staff and faculty that work alongside me. This passion is why I come before you to testify in support of LD 1219. By increasing funding for Maine's universities, the state of Maine is directly investing in the success and happiness of not only its current residents, but the success and happiness of future Mainers for years to come.