

Amanda Gavin
South Portland
LD 1533

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

My name is Amanda Gavin, and I am a PhD student at the University of Maine, where I work as a research and teaching assistant. I live in South Portland, Maine. I am here today to testify in support of LD 1533 - An Act to Ensure the Retention of R1 Research Institution Status by the University of Maine. State appropriation for University of Maine has been steadily declining to below the national average. As you heard during from many UMS employees in testimonies for LD 210, this chronic underfunding means that faculty and teaching assistants do not have the resources they need to teach and do research. Further, many employees are paid so low that they are in financially precarious situations and struggling to meet their basic needs. The R1 status of University of Maine is a prestigious honor that was reached and maintained by the work of PhD students. Without us, there is no R1 status or world-class research. The work PhD students do benefits the State of Maine. I study water quality in Maine lakes, a multi-billion dollar resource. My peers study forest resources, they are training to be science educators, and they develop cutting-edge renewable energy technologies. Despite our contributions to the State, many of us live in precarity. We don't know if we will have funding next semester, or the funding that we do get is well below the cost of living for the Orono region. It is unacceptable that PhD students at UMaine are food insecure, struggling to pay rent, and swimming in medical debt. This bill will contribute the success of UMaine as an R1 institution and support the PhD students who do the research that our R1 status relies on.