

Written Testimony in Support of LD 1219
From Gretchen Legler, Professor, University of Maine Farmington
For the Public Hearing on April 24, 2025 of the Education and Cultural Affairs
Committee of the Maine State Legislature

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

My name is Gretchen Legler and I am a full professor at the University of Maine Farmington, where I have taught English and Creative Writing for 25 years. I live in the town of Farmington. I offer this written testimony today 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

When I came to UMF in 2000 along with a large cohort other new faculty members the campus was a vibrant place, with its full complement of 2000 students, jam-packed parking lots, dorms that were so bursting at the seams that a new one was under construction. During these growing years in the early 2000's, we saw the construction of the beautiful (and Green-Certified) Kalikow Education Center and the Emery Arts Center. We all had our shoulders to the wheel--faculty were creatively collaborating on new courses and programs to serve student needs, students were launching new literary magazines and clubs. It all felt so alive. Now, faculty frequently refer to our campus as a ghost town. Over the past several years, little by little it seems as if our vibrant liberal arts community has been whittled down to a nub. UMF Art Gallery: Closed. Women's Studies Program: Eliminated. Philosophy and Religion programs: Gone. World Languages: Gone. UMF Community Chorus: Discontinued. Mainely Outdoors Recreational Programs: a shell of its former self. Certain programs and majors (theater and history among them): on the chopping block. The situation is dire. We all know that. We need more income, we need to spend less money. Faculty have been increasingly pressured to focus on being revenue generators instead of teachers and mentors, and to teach online, abandoning our in-person residential mission. We simply can't go on like this. UMF is a special place. When I started at this campus I was so honored to be a part of this team of incredibly creative and accomplished faculty providing an affordable liberal arts education to Maine's students, a good majority of whom are first generation college students. It breaks my heart to see UMF so crippled financially.

