

Rebecca Davis Gibbons

Associate Professor

University of Southern Maine

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

My name is Rebecca Davis Gibbons. I am an Associate Professor in the political science department at the University of Southern Maine. I grew up in Maine and feel fortunate to be able to work and raise my family here. It is an honor and privilege to be able to contribute to our great state.

I am writing 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 University of Maine System, to include the University of Southern Maine, is in dire need of additional funding.

At USM, many of our facilities are old and in need of significant repair. To give you examples:

- I work in a building where I have come into the office and found all of my books soggy because of the excessive humidity caused by the building's old heating system. (My mother worked in this same building close to 50 years ago and not much has changed.)
- I have walked into my classroom in the morning and found a giant puddle on the floor from the roof leaking.
- I have been unable to project slides necessary for lectures because of old projection systems.
- Students have shared similar experiences with their dorms in terms of inadequate heating and cooling and worse.

Even new buildings have faced problems that have displaced students for periods of time. More resources would mean all of these problems could be prevented or handled more quickly.

USM has phenomenal students. We have traditional college students doing their best to learn and grown, highly motivated military veterans, tenacious recent immigrants, and dedicated parents juggling so much to complete their degrees.

When our students look around and see the problems with facilities across both the Portland and Gorham campuses, it sends a message that they are not worthy of the state's investment. It sends a message that the state and its government do not care about their education. This is not what we want to communicate to our hardworking and motivated students, many of whom are trying to make a life and career in this state. It is in every Maine resident's interest to send the message through adequate resources that we care about our students and the quality of their education within the UMaine system.

We have incredible professors, administrators, and staff members who care so much and work hard for our students every day, at levels of pay that make it difficult to live in Southern Maine. They deserve better too. I have spoken with our students at length about the resource constraints of the University of Maine System. They see staff members going above and beyond because they care about USM and USM's students, but these staff members are not provided with the sufficient resources to do their jobs, nor do they receive adequate pay.

The future of the state Maine – its leaders, its economic growth – reside in the classrooms, dining halls, and dormitories of the University of the Maine System. Let's invest in that future.