

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of this Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Devan Arnold, and I am both a former student and employee of the University of Maine's flagship campus at Orono. 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 the benefit of seeing both sides of the operations of the University of Maine. I worked in the Office of Student Financial Aid for two years, and earned both my Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the School of Economics. I have benefitted greatly from the work and services offered by the University of Maine System, and I have seen firsthand the benefits that the System provides to our state. I have also seen the struggles and challenges that the System faces as they try to juggle the needs of students and the financial realities of large institutions. As my economics professor, Dr Keith Evans, used to tell us, "Economics is people doing the best they can given their constraints." By not investing more public funds in our impressive and esteemed Public University System, we have placed the administration of that System under a series of incredibly difficult constraints. When students feel the pinch because tuition is rising year over year at a school that they might love, it makes the choice to come to or stay in Maine to study a hard one to make. Students might not have the full view of the inner working of a machine as intricate and complex as the University of Maine System, but they can tell when the health of their beloved institution is ailing.

Not only does public funding improve our ability to serve Maine students, but it also is a good investment in Maine communities. Working for the University of Maine System is a career path for many, and one that those who choose to walk can be immensely proud of. When we ensure that the University of Maine System provides stable, good paying jobs, we are investing in an economic base that benefits the whole state of Maine. Not only do the Universities attract knowledge-based workers in researchers and professors, but they also provide the aforementioned stable employment to a variety of skillsets for the residents of outlying communities. As someone who has benefitted from employment with the University of Maine, I can say from personal experience that I would not be nearly as well off as I am today if it weren't for the economic stability I was afforded by my time working for and learning from the University.

These are uncertain times for many things – education chief amongst them. I am proud of the courage and strength that our State has shown in these difficult times, and I am

proud that we as a people have chosen to strive for an ideal in service of a brighter future. It is my sincere hope that the esteemed members of this Education and Cultural Affairs Committee move LD 1219 forward to the larger body of the Legislature in a continued service towards that shared future. Thank you for your time and attention.

With hope and respect,

Devan C Arnold