



MAINE AFL-CIO

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Testimony of Adam Goode, Maine AFL-CIO Legislative & Political Director, In Support of LD 1533, “An Act to Ensure the Retention of R1 Research Institution Status by the University of Maine”

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Adam Goode. I’m the Legislative and Political Director of the Maine AFL-CIO. We represent 40,000 working people in the state of Maine. We work to improve the lives and working conditions of our members and all working people. We testify in support of LD 1533.

Our support for LD 1533 comes from two angles. First, public higher education is one option for working class people to get ahead in life. Maintaining R1 Research Institution Status helps The University of Maine and that helps our state, including working people.

Second, we represent graduate workers with the University of Maine Graduate Workers Union-UAW. Graduate workers do difficult jobs. They teach, grade and perform the research that powers the educational and research mission of the university. The University of Maine works because of graduate workers. Unfortunately, graduate workers have struggled with low and inconsistent pay, substandard health benefits and the need for a voice at work.

It is important for graduate workers that our public universities are fully funded. When universities are underfunded there are higher tuition costs and less investment in young people, research and the future of our state. A lot of the research funding that comes to The University of Maine comes from federal sources, and the federal government is currently very unpredictable when it comes to research funding, especially in terms of general cuts to educational grants.

R1 status is based on how much money a university spends on research and how many research Ph.Ds are graduated from that institution. On the second factor, The University of Maine has just barely scraped by. The threshold is 70 research doctorate degrees being awarded per year over a three year period. The University of Maine’s most recent average was 70.3.

If there were just three less doctorates awarded in the three year period, we would not have met R1 status. This narrow meeting of the criteria was buoyed by an influx of doctorates being awarded after pandemic restrictions lessened, something we hopefully won’t be able to count on in the future. For these reasons the addition of 25

graduate assistantships is justified. Before The University of Maine received R1 status in 2022 they were designated as R2. Adding 25 graduate assistantships helps maintain that status.

Whether The University of Maine maintains R1 status impacts the availability of matching funds and private donors. The graduate workers want to see that The University of Maine maintains this status. They also know that it is well accepted that research money is money that has a multiplier effect on the Maine economy. That is all on top of the fact that this would improve the number of graduate worker positions and improve expectations and working conditions.

For these reasons we ask that you support LD 1533.