

Nicole Kellett
University of Maine Farmington
LD 1219

I am writing in support of LD 1219 to increase funding to the University of Maine system and raise the minimum hourly wage for university employees. I have been a professor at the University of Maine Farmington (UMF) since 2011. I can testify to the remarkable impact UMF has on our corner of the western mountains and the state of Maine. Approximately half of our students are first generation college students. We serve a large number of Veterans and increasing numbers of adult learners longing to earn a degree to further expand their contributions to the state of Maine. Our students come to campus eager to make a difference. We have students dedicated to becoming well trained educators, scientists, non-profit and business leaders, artists, entrepreneurs, and more. As a public liberal arts college we offer an education that is based on diverse experiential learning, small class sizes, critical thinking, and building skills through close mentorship that prepare our students to enter the workforce and give back to their communities. Most importantly we provide an education that is relatively affordable to meet the needs of students throughout the state. We also attract students from outside of Maine and New England. From their experience at UMF, our students fall in love with this region of Maine and long to stay. Without a strong public university system, programs will be cut, the quality of education will decline, and people will seek education elsewhere or not at all. We need to increase funding to provide quality higher education that will keep Mainers in the state and attract others to the area. A thriving public university system contributes to a well qualified and committed workforce, improving our local economies and fostering vibrant communities throughout the great state of Maine. Please support LD 1219 and our future.