

To: Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Lynn Ploof-Davis

Re: Support for **LD 2147**, "An Act to Provide Funding to Improve the College and Career Readiness of Certain Students in Androscoggin and Oxford Counties"

Date: 1/21/2026, 10:00 am

Introduction Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and members of the committee, my name is Lynn Ploof-Davis and I live in Wilton. I retired from a 43-year career with Upward Bound on June 6. I am writing to testify in support of LD 2147. I would like to thank sponsors Senator Dusen and Representative Murphy and co-sponsors Senator Bennett, Senator Bickford, and Representative Hepler for their foresight and understanding of the complex situation that led to the abrupt defunding of the River Valley Upward Bound program at the University of Maine at Farmington by the US Department of Education. This action left 60 low-income and first-generation high school students with the devastating news that they would no longer have the help and support of Upward Bound to pursue their dreams of a college education.

I began my career in the fall of 1982 with a trip in my yellow VW beetle to Telstar High School for my first meetings with Upward Bound students. In spite of the fact that I ended up in NH and had to search for a pay phone, those first meetings were the beginning of a long career of advising students, administering TRIO grants and advocating for equity in high education.

In those early years, Buckfield, Dirigo, Mt. Valley, Oxford Hills, and Telstar were part of the original UB grant. As time went on, and the project dealt with funding limitations and target area contraction, we lost the ability to provide services to those schools. It was the relentless advocacy of an RSU 10 professional who was both an administrator and Upward Bound alum that convinced us to write a second Upward Bound grant, funded in September of 2012. Since that time, students in six schools have accessed services to help them reach their educational and career goals. They have attended robust and challenging academic summer programs, gone on college trips, received individualized academic advising, received support for their families, and gained the confidence and skills to allow them to be them successful in higher education.

The research is clear. Every metric in education, from GPA, to high school graduation, to college enrollment, and college graduation, is more likely with participation in Upward Bound. UB students also tend to remain close to home which leads them becoming active and contributing citizens in their communities.

An additional year of funding from the state of Maine would arrive at a critical time and allow the TRIO professionals at UMF to begin the process of writing and submitting a grant for the next competition, in 2027. More importantly, it would reignite the hopes and dreams of 60 students whose dreams were crushed last fall.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to share my perspective. I urge the committee to vote **Ought to Pass** on **LD 2147**.

Commented [LP1]: