

Stacey Hughes  
Maine School of Science and Math  
LD 2008

Good morning,

As a parent of two boys, one who graduated from The Maine School of Science and Math, (MSSM) just last spring and a current first year freshman, I have seen first hand the failing infrastructure, dilapidated buildings, issues with heating, poor nutritional program and struggle with retaining staff. I have watched this school struggle for the past five years, operating on a shoestring budget, flat-funded by the legislature since 2017! This is a magnet school for students who excel in our state in the areas of science and mathematics. These are our gifted students, our future engineers and innovators who sacrifice being home to go to northern Maine so they can receive the best education they can and to finally be challenged in their education and take classes that teach to their ability, not their age. These students are dual enrolled and often receive their Associate's degree prior to their high school diploma. However, they have the bare minimum up there and no funding to make necessary improvements. The legislature created this amazing opportunity 30 years ago and then forgot about it for the past decade! MSSM does not have a school board. It does not have a population of citizens that pay property taxes to support its budget... so where does the money come from?

Of course, I do not want to say no to money, but I am not sure if asking sending schools to pay the cost is the right answer. Well I do agree with free choice for education, I am concerned whether that will break up local communities. I do know that if a town does not have a local high school, then the student does already have money that follows them anywhere in the state, including MSSM. So this idea would only help students where their sending school is not contributing yet and that is a small percentage. I am also concerned that the amount on the table today is written as a one time offer. Again, I am not saying no to money, as any amount is helpful. But following flat funding for a decade, the legislature can do better. Our MSSM students and faculty representing our great state of Maine need us to do better.