

Good Morning distinguished Committee Members and Mr. Chair, My name is Trynitee Fallon, I am from Berwick Maine, and I am a Senior at the Maine School of Science and Mathematics. For the past two years, I have had the opportunity to be the President of MSSM's Student Senate, a position that has afforded me a seat on the Board of Trustees for the school. These positions have given me a unique perspective of MSSM, allowing me to combine the experiences of a student with the knowledge of a Board Member. From emotional conversations with peers about mental health issues to two hour budget meetings with administrators and other board members, my MSSM experience has included discussions about nearly every issue the school has faced during my time here.

For the past four years, I have called the Maine School of Science and Mathematics home. It seems uncanny to call a school your home, but as many who have attended MSSM will tell you, that is exactly how the community feels. Like any home, MSSM has its issues. Students often bicker with Residential Instructors over how late they can stay up and how loud they can play the music in their room. We scold friends for leaving dirty dishes in the sink and forgetting their laundry in the dryer for much too long. We leave common spaces filled with personal belongings instead of bringing it to our room. One problem that prevails over all of these, however, is MSSM's financial circumstance. MSSM's fiscal difficulties are not a silent killer, not something that only causes burden for administrators and board members, rather, it is an omnipresent source of worry that impacts each student on a daily basis. As an academically driven magnet school, the stress brought to students by tests and due dates should be second to none, but it takes a backseat to the stress of whether or not our school will survive to see another year. Each summer, students leave MSSM uncertain if they will have teachers when they come back in August, and their concern is not unwarranted. At the end of the 2021-22 school year, when students left for summer vacation, our usually four-person math department consisted of a single teacher. The teachers that stay are overwhelmed and stressed, often taking on obligations beyond their position and being forced to sacrifice student time for second jobs and extra work. My freshman year, the school decided to remove the position of academic dean due to a lack of necessary funding, creating gaps in communication and transferring the responsibilities usually fulfilled by this role to already overworked and underpaid teachers. Sports and music programs remain in doubt each year, as students often have to vie for their necessity despite the uncertainty of how they will be paid for. Broken fume hoods and subpar facilities that have been pushed aside for more immediate concerns hinder students' ability to complete chemistry labs safely and force faculty to change curated lesson plans.

Despite all this, MSSM has given me opportunities and experiences I could not have received anywhere else. I have gained an education that has prepared me for college and life beyond that, made friends who know me better than I know myself, made connections with teachers that have furthered me intellectually, and had the opportunity to be a leader in a community that cares about me as much as I care about it. But for everything it has given to me

and other students from Maine, all it has gotten back is neglect. I know that my time at MSSM will not be changed by the outcome of this bill. But it will change the lives of hundreds of other Maine students, from kids who cannot even fathom asking their parents to pay for a school that costs nearly \$10,000 a year (a factor that nearly deterred my own application), to my 8 year old sister who tells me every time I come home that she can't wait to go to MSSM just like me. I only hope that the school will still be around, containing the same passionate teachers and community, the same feeling of home and belonging, and the same educational opportunities, for her to love it as much as I have learned to.