

LD 1656—Ought to Pass

An Act to Allow Student Representation Within the Governance of the University of Maine System

Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

April 23, 2023

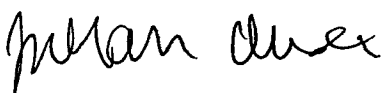
Hello, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and the distinguished Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Keegan Tripp, and I am currently a Political Science student at the University of Maine. And I am Julian Ober, and I am also a Political Science student at the University of Maine. We are here in support of LD 1656 to allow the addition of student voice within the University of Maine System Board of Trustees, and we urge you to support this initiative as well.

When it comes to making decisions on behalf of a body, the individuals making those decisions should reflect that body. When the UMaine System Board of Trustees votes on key issues such as budgets, system policy, and all other topics that impact the students of the system, they are missing the first hand experience of what it is like to be a student attending campus today. While our current student representatives can attend every other meeting the BOT holds, they lack a true voice at the table to express their concerns. This creates a disconnect between system leadership and the bodies they serve. Allowing for us students to have a say in our education is important as we are the largest stakeholder in terms of we contribute almost half of the UMS budget through tuition and fees. Originally, when the BOT was established, the state covered all tuition. Now we make up over 40% of the budget, which is more than the state contribution, and yet we still have almost zero say in how our money is spent.

We've seen many cases of student initiative across the system in the forms of movements like Divest UMS, the student governments at each institution, and student organizing on community and state issues such as this. We are confident as both students of the University of Maine Orono and campus leaders that student motivation for representing their campus will be met with enthusiasm. Students have proven time and time again that they are ready to step up to the plate, if only you'd give them the chance to do so. Trust should go both ways, and the only way to achieve that is for the state to trust it's students to help in key decisions and change our public system for the better.

We are both extremely grateful to be students of the University of Maine System, and we hope that you will take our support for LD 1656 and vote to increase the representation on the UMS Board of Trustees.

Sincerely,



Keegan Tripp and Julian Ober
Orono, Me
University of Maine Students