

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

My name is Steven Santiago, a student activist at UMaine and a resident of Orono. I am writing to you on behalf of students to testify in favor of LD 1656.

According to the University, tuition makes up 61% of Education and General funds of the University of Maine. Students pour their resources and their souls into the college of our hearts. Yet we have no say on what the University does with our money. This is highly undemocratic.

We need representation on the board of trustees.

Our voice is often regarded as important, and that the University listens to its students. But how can this be when decisions are made without our input. Take Maine Day for example. While a committee was formed that had students involved to figure out what to do in replacement of Maine Day, this was only after the fact that Maine Day - a favorite student holiday - was canceled unilaterally by the Administration.

Students also had no say in the management of their dining halls. Both students general and student workers were not taken into account when UMaine decided to partner with Sodexo. This is likely because the Administration knew such a move would be unpopular with students, although it might save them money. Students care more about quality services than profits and costs.

Our voice is not heard on campuses around the state. This needs to change. We must have a say in what is happening in our colleges and universities. We demand that this must change. LD 1656 must pass in order to advance the interests of students across the University of Maine system. The very same students who support local economies, who support our state, and who represent Maine on the world stage.

Thank you, honorable members of the Committee.