



Troy D. Jackson
President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE
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3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony in Support of LD 2118
An Act to Increase Funding for the Maine School of Science and Mathematics

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Good afternoon Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and the honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Troy Jackson and I have the honor of serving as President of the Maine Senate and the privilege of representing the good people of Aroostook County in the Maine Legislature. I'm here today to introduce LD 2118, An Act to Provide Funding to the Maine School of Science and Mathematics.

As you know, the Maine School of Science and Mathematics is a public residential high school located in Aroostook County that offers a STEM-centric curriculum to accepted students from around the state. Founded by the Maine Legislature in 1995, the magnet school provides a top-notch education to students that are academically gifted but struggle in their current education environment for any number of reasons. Many graduates of the school have gone on to pursue exciting opportunities in STEM fields both in Maine and across the country.

The quality, holistic program offered at MSSM has garnered national recognition. In 2019, U.S. News and World Report named MSSM the #1 High School in Maine, the #2 High School in the U.S., and the #2 Magnet School in the U.S. Later that year, Newsweek named MSSM one of the top ten STEM high schools in the country.

Unfortunately, state funding for MSSM remains stagnant, threatening the institution's viability and ability to continue offering an award-winning education with unique STEM courses. The state covers tuition for in-state students and some financial aid is available for room and board. But the flat funding does not go far enough to support this unique public institution. Not only is the school struggling to offer competitive wages, attracting and retaining staff within existing resources has become a real challenge. At the same time, it is vital that a residential school has the resources and professionals on staff to support the health and well-being of students.

LD 2118 would simply require ongoing funding of \$1,000,000 to MSSM to help Maine's public, residential high school meet operational expenses and provide greater financial support to instate students who demonstrate a need for room and board expenses.

There is no question in my mind that the MSSM is an asset to our state. The affordable, high-quality STEM education benefits students and families today, and our workforce and economy tomorrow. By providing a modest increase in ongoing funding to MSSM, we can ensure our state continues to benefit for years to come.

Thank you for your time today. I know there are a number of students, parents and alumni here who can better speak to their experience at MSSM and its value to our state, however, I am happy to answer any questions I can.

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