

**Dylan Griffin, University of Maine at Farmington Student (Saco)
Testimony in Support of Funding in the FY26-27 Biennial Budget
for the University of Maine System (LD 210, Page A-636)**

Good morning, Senators Rotundo and Rafferty, Representatives Gattine and Murphy, and members of the Appropriations and Education Committees.

My name is Dylan Griffin, and I am from Saco, Maine. I am a Senior at the University of Maine at Farmington. I plan to graduate this coming May with a degree in Health Education with a focus in Physical Education. I will have also completed a minor in coaching.

My time at UMF, and within the University of Maine System, has been as great as I could have ever imagined.

As a student, and as a member and captain of the men's basketball team, I have been able to experience an overwhelming amount of support and encouragement from my peers, my coaches, and my professors. Whether it is inside the classroom, on the court in Dearborn Gymnasium, or walking through downtown Farmington, there is always somebody there to cheer you on.

When it came to my college decision, I narrowed a list of seven schools down to two. My final decision was between UMF and a private college located in Maine. While weighing my options with my mother, there was one staggering difference between the two schools. The affordability that UMF, and other schools in the University of Maine System, offer is a key selling point for many students and it certainly was for me. Ultimately, I believe that in selecting UMF, I made the best decision to prepare myself for my future as an educator here in Maine.

For students such as myself who plan to enter the teacher workforce here in our home state, we understand that we will never be properly compensated for our efforts as educators. However, it is not the monetary value that drives us down this path, it is our passion and dedication to educating and empowering future generations of students for years to come.

Because we will not make a lot of money as educators, we cannot afford to go into a lot of debt to earn the four-year and even advanced degrees we will need for employment in Maine school districts. That's why providing more funding to the University of Maine System, which produces the most and best prepared Maine teachers, is so important. When you invest in this System, you are investing in people like me, you are investing in

Maine's teacher workforce, and you are investing in the future generations of students we will serve as teachers, coaches, and school counselors.

With UMF specifically, a few upgrades throughout campus would go a long way. It is the oldest campus within the University of Maine System. However, students still make the decision to leave everything that we have ever known and pack up our lives to move to Farmington. We make this choice knowing that UMF is providing us with the best value and access to the best preparation to become an educator in Maine, including through multiple hands-on field experiences that allow us to gain valuable knowledge and understanding of what our future careers hold. I am currently doing my student teaching experience in Mt. Blue High School.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences with you today and for your past support of the University of Maine System, which made it possible for me to go to UMF and to soon become an educator. I hope you will continue to invest in our state's public universities so they can continue to properly equip our future educators.