

Testimony in Support of LD 787: An Act to Clarify Residency Requirements for and Provide Funding to the Maine School of Science and Mathematics

March 27, 2025

Senator Raferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Bev Uhlenhake, and I come to you today as a parent of three MSSM students (two freshmen and one junior), as a former local elected official who understands how difficult conversations around school budgets and taxes can be, and as someone who cares deeply about the economy of Maine.

I know that other folks giving testimony today will talk about the importance of this school to the kids who attend. They'll talk about students who find their people and how the opportunities at MSSM are offered are incredibly unique and must be supported. As a parent of three formerly incredibly bored students, I agree.

But I want to spend my time touching on how important this school is to the State of Maine and reminding you how important you are to this school.

In terms of economic development for the State of Maine, we need to think about investing in MSSM the same as investing in R&D. The students who attend MSSM are incredibly intelligent. They think in ways that most of us can't grasp. These kids are the next Habib Daghers for the State of Maine. If we invest in them now, we can harness their minds and ideas and economic drivers in the future. Their success now is our future success.

As for your importance, I want to take a moment to remind you that this is a school owned and run by the State of Maine. This is not a private school. It's not a charter school. It's not an academy. It is YOUR school. You and the Department of Education are its school board in terms of funding. The school staff and parents and students don't have the ability to go to the local school board and ask for more funding. That doesn't exist. The money only comes from you. If we want Maine's incredibly talented STEM students to have access to inspiring, life-changing opportunities, no matter their families' income, I ask that you please make the investment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Bev Uhlenhake

On behalf of Ben, Ansley, and Quinn Uhlenhake