



**Student Mackenzie Morin**

**Testimony in Support of LD 681, "An Act Regarding Public Higher Education Funding in the State"**

***Maine Maritime Academy***

Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Committee. My name is Mackenzie Morin, from Bangor, Maine, and I'm a proud student at Maine Maritime Academy. I am a senior in the Coastal and Marine Environmental Science and Small Vessel Operations dual major program.

I chose MMA because it is the *only* school in the country that offers this unique combination, allowing me to study the ocean both scientifically and operationally. That blend of academic rigor and hands-on maritime training simply doesn't exist anywhere else.

I'm here today not just as a student but as someone whose life has been profoundly shaped by this school. MMA has given me opportunities I never thought could be possible, both in leadership and in the field. I am standing here today in front of you because of those opportunities, and I'm asking for your support so that future students can have those same chances.

MMA is unlike any other school in Maine. It's rigorous, it's practical, and it's rooted in a strong sense of purpose. I've had the privilege of serving as President of our Student Government Association, after working my way up from being a Senator to the Treasurer, and through these roles, I've seen how resilient and committed our students are. We're taught to lead, to adapt, and to step up, whether it's in the classroom, a lab, or out at sea.

One of the most transformative experiences I've had since starting my journey at MMA was sailing as a student researcher aboard the Arctic Schooner *Bowdoin*. We sailed from Castine, ME, to the icy fjords of Greenland, collecting oceanographic data in Arctic conditions. No simulation can match that. We faced real challenges, navigated unpredictable seas, and worked as a team to carry out real science. It was demanding, humbling, and absolutely unforgettable. No other college in Maine, or the country, can offer that kind of experience.

And let me be clear, this isn't a private college education. It's public. It's affordable. And it's transformative. As a first-generation college student from Bangor, I knew I couldn't take on overwhelming debt. MMA gave me access to an extraordinary education at a cost that made sense.

We're not just graduating with degrees, we're graduating with licenses, certifications, field experience, leadership skills, and jobs already lined up before we are even handed our diplomas.

We are scientists, engineers, mariners, and community leaders.

But to keep doing that, MMA needs your support.

Our ships need maintenance. Our labs need upgrades. Our students deserve the same resources and recognition as any other public college in the state. If Maine wants to lead in ocean innovation, clean maritime energy, coastal resilience, and sustainable fisheries, then Maine needs to invest in the one institution that's already training the workforce to do that: Maine Maritime Academy.

I ask you to see the future we're building in Castine. It's bold. It's hardworking. And it's worth every dollar.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your support of Maine Maritime Academy.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,  
Mackenzie Morin  
Student  
Maine Maritime Academy