



**Student William Sherrill**

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

***Maine Maritime Academy***

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is William Sherrill, I am a 2/C Midshipman, a junior, at Maine Maritime Academy in the Marine Transportation Operations program. I am a native of Nobleboro and like so many others in our state, I grew up around the water. I spent my childhood summers on the family boat and once I reached working age, I landed my first job aboard one of the Monhegan Island ferries. During the four summers I spent as a deckhand, I fell in love with the sea and decided that I would pursue a maritime education. For me, choosing Maine Maritime was an easy decision. The school had everything I desired, from hands-on education to practical leadership experience and a structured Regimental program. Maine Maritime Academy and the Town of Castine felt like home from the moment I arrived on campus for my first visit.

Throughout my three years as a student, MMA has afforded me opportunities unparalleled by any other institution in the state. In the unlimited license program, of which I am a member, all students complete two 70-day voyages aboard an Academy training ship, additionally a two or three month internship is required aboard a commercial vessel. Immediately following my first year, I sailed on a transatlantic voyage aboard the Training Ship State of Maine. We called on ports in the Azores, Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom. For many in my class, sea term was their first time leaving the United States. As an institution located in rural Maine, MMA does an exceptionally good job at exposing its students to the world we live in. In addition to the traveling aspect of the voyage, students also learn the fundamentals of shipboard life. Cadets stand watch during all hours of the day, complete various maintenance tasks, and spend full days in the classroom. Uniquely, the first year cadets spend half of their voyage in the engine room and half in the bridge, regardless of major; a perfect example of Maine Maritime’s well-rounded approach to a nautical education.

Cadet shipping, which is a form of internship, typically takes place during the summer after sophomore year. This past summer, I spent 91 days aboard a coastwise chemical tanker on the Gulf Coast. Over those three months, I stood navigational and cargo watches and assisted with on-deck maintenance, all while completing an over 300-page academic project. It was during this experience where I truly saw the value in my education from Maine Maritime. The Academy's emphasis on attention to detail, perseverance, and professionalism suddenly became very tangible. Despite being a deck cadet, the engineering experience I gained on my 4/C cruise served me well, as I was often able to assist my engineers with maintenance on the ship's machinery. Not only does cadet shipping test a student's technical and academic ability, it also requires well-developed interpersonal skills. As in much of life, the key to success is getting along with others. On a ship this is critically important, seeing as you interact with each other for hours a day, for several weeks or months on end. But by the time a student arrives at their cadet ship, they are already well-versed at having to quickly assimilate into a group, it is one of the key objectives of their 6-week long initial training period. Everything that I have completed as part of the Maine Maritime curriculum, and especially as part of the Regimental program, has helped prepare me for the next step of my career.

An integral part of my experience at Maine Maritime Academy has been the Regiment of Midshipmen. Any student pursuing an unlimited tonnage license is required to be in the Regiment and other non-license students may voluntarily join. Within the program, students are required to report for daily morning formation and maintain uniform and grooming standards. Courses in leadership are required every semester and leadership opportunities are made readily available. I have twice served as a member of the training cadre for new students and I am currently serving as the Cadet Master, the ranking cadet aboard the summer training voyage. The Academy has provided me with opportunities to practice both small and large scale leadership. From leading ten new students through their first several days at MMA to now preparing to lead roughly 240 Maine cadets aboard the Training Ship Kennedy, my leadership experience at Maine Maritime has certainly come full-circle.

The Academy also stresses leadership outside of the classroom and the Regiment. Many of our students are leaders on NCAA sports teams while others play an active role in managing the school's clubs and organizations. A few dozen students volunteer their time at the local fire department, an opportunity that is not all too common at other colleges and universities. I have been fortunate enough to spend the past three years volunteering for the Castine Fire Rescue Department as a Firefighter and as a Lieutenant, and I view it as one of the most valuable components of my Maine Maritime experience. It is no surprise that with the variety of opportunities at MMA, students choose to pursue a multitude of career paths upon graduation. While many alumni go to sea, others choose to work in the private sector ashore, and some

pursue careers of public service. MMA graduates serve in our armed forces, protect our communities as firefighters and law enforcement officers, and even work for federal agencies, such as the NTSB and NOAA. It is evident that a Maine Maritime education produces well-rounded individuals, capable of having successful careers in any number of fields.

I truly believe that Maine Maritime Academy lays a foundation for success. The Academy teaches its students a variety of skills but from talking with alumni, parents, and employers it is clear that the school teaches us how to do one thing exceptionally well: think. We are taught how to think through the job at hand, how to think about performing the task safely, and how to think during an emergency. This ability to think rationally is garnered over the semesters spent at Maine Maritime. From the stressful wakeups during the first days of 4/C year, to the discipline and accountability needed when waking up for midnight watches, to the attention to detail required for inspections, each step in the process helps to prepare students for their lives after graduation. I am incredibly thankful for the opportunities that Maine Maritime Academy has provided me, including the ability to speak before you all. The Academy is truly a special place and it has made me the individual I am today. I look forward to my final year ahead and eagerly wait to see how my education will serve me throughout my career.

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

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,  
William Sherrill  
Student  
Maine Maritime Academy

**MAINE MARITIME ACADEMY**

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