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Waldoboro

To the Members of the Education Committee,  
I am writing today in support of LD 1389, a bill submitted by Representative Scott Cuddy which would remove the "sunset" clause from the statute that governs the operations of Maine Ocean School (MOS).

My name is Katherine Osborne, and I am a parent of one of the students at MOS. My son, Max, is a senior at MOS; this is his 2nd year attending this remarkable school. Last year in February, just weeks prior to the state-wide shut down due to Covid-19, I submitted testimony in favor of keeping Maine Ocean School up & running. I stand firmly by those words today.

This year, I'd like to share a story.

The story is set in a hospital, but that is not where it began. This year, on the very last day of March, Max started running a fever and experiencing pain in his right hip. He's no stranger to this set of symptoms. Last year, after remote learning had been initiated state wide, he struggled with this the first time. In June 2020, the diagnosis was mesenteric adenitis, something one simply waits out. A few weeks of antibiotics knocked out the fever, but the pain in the hip lingered all summer, not dissipating until the start of the new school year, his senior year.

Suddenly, just as April 2021 arrives, he has an apparent relapse. This year, after barrage of tests including covid swabs, blood tests, X-rays, and an MRI, he ended up in the Barbara Bush Pediatric wing at Maine Med on Tuesday, April 6th. We didn't leave again until the following Monday, late in the afternoon.

Now, the Barbara Bush facility at Maine Med is truly world class, a gem in the crown of medical facilities in our state. They work diligently across a wide spectrum of specialties to meet the needs of pediatric patients. Their team for school aged patients includes an Educational Liaison who knocked on our door over the weekend of our stay. Her job is to help students re-assimilate into school when their stay at the hospital is done. As you might imagine, students who are hospitalized for a week or more can quickly fall behind in their regular work. The Liaison's job is to work with schools to make sure students are not overwhelmed by a backlog of overdue assignments. She wanted to know if we needed her to call Max's school and advocate on his behalf.

I thanked her for the offer, but I knew it was not needed in Max's situation. I was confident that Maine Ocean School would neither shirk their oath to give Max the best education possible nor overwhelm him with work just as he is re-matriculating into school life. How can I be so sure? My confidence is born of experience. Last year, when these symptoms first presented, MOS worked with Max personally, giving him the extra time he needed to finish his junior year on a positive note with strong grades. They didn't make the work "easy" for him; they simply gave him the gift of time. They had the flexibility to do it and the commitment to make it happen. I have never seen a school more dedicated to their students.

This is his senior year; graduation looms on the horizon. Time extensions will be out of the question. Yet I know and trust that Max and his teachers will work together to create an academic recovery plan that will put him back on track to finish on a high note and graduate with his classmates on time.

Max's medical journey is not yet over. I am grateful to be walking this part of the path with MOS by our sides. It takes some of the worry away that would otherwise be gnawing at me. There is more to say about how Max has responded so positively to student life at MOS. For example, it turns out he is pretty good at ocean charting, and I've overheard him explaining math concepts in the evenings to his classmates on their google meets platform. I think he actually loves his engineering class where he's been using his extensive Lego brick collection to build working models of different types of engines. It's the first class to spark intrinsic motivation for him. He's actually been working over spring break tweaking his model steam engine design to iron out some of the kinks he's encountered.

Maine Ocean School is worth every ounce of support we can give it. Last year, when Covid-19 struck and schools everywhere were scrambling to devise protocols for delivering education remotely, MOS was ready to swing into action. They had seen the pandemic on the horizon and started making plans before governor's stay-at-home orders were issued. That's the kind of leadership that we should not stifle in our great state's educational environment. Removing the sunset clause from the statute governing its operations will free up MOS resources to focus more fully on their students' educational needs, grow their student body, and develop into a world class institution to make Maine proud.

Respectfully submitted,  
Katherine G. Osborne