



April 22, 2021

Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Maine State Legislature

100 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333

Good afternoon Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Distinguished Members of the Committee.

My name is Sara-Jo Richeson, I am a freshman at Maine Ocean School. Over the last year, I found that I truly do like school work. In the past, I just wasn't given school work in a manner that actually made me want to keep learning, or in a way that makes me want to go above and beyond. Before I kept getting so frustrated in classes and not doing my work because it didn't make sense to do it if I had no idea how it would ever help me. I was just about done with school when I heard about Maine Ocean School. I was hesitant about applying for fear that I wasn't good enough or I wouldn't make it. I finally put in the papers, and who knew? I made it! I got in and found an amazing team of teachers who pour their heart and soul into making sure we succeed. I found a new passion and was even able to keep working on Wednesdays as long as I stayed caught up. With the help from all the teachers I was able to stay on pace, understand what I was learning, and I felt like I was being heard and understood.

Although school has been going great, I have had some trouble with mental health and was hospitalized for two weeks. While I was there I was so anxious about missing classes, but my mom reassured me that the teachers were here to help and wanted me to get better first. Sure enough, Miss. Kristie and Dr. Bragdon called my mom almost every other day to check in on me and to make sure I was okay. Hearing this, I was able to put my mind at ease and focus on my treatment. Coming out of the hospital is a very stressful thing on it's own, but when you add all the missing assignments and classwork it gets beyond stressful. I was expecting to come back and be expected to "pull up your boot straps and move on." That's not what I got though. I came back to teachers who genuinely cared. They made sure that I had an easy transition back and I was able to get caught up on my time as a way to make sure I wasn't getting overwhelmed. Without their amazing support I wouldn't be where I am today, and I'm not just saying that to say it.

I would recommend this school to anyone and everyone. So by voting in favor of LD 1389, you will be impacting more lives than you realize.



A public magnet high school for marine  
science, technology, transportation, and engineering

Thank you for your time and consideration, it is greatly appreciated,  
Sara-Jo Richeson