



April 22, 2021
Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Maine State Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Gayle Zydlewski, I live in Hampden. I am the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Maine School for Marine Science, Technology, Transportation, and Engineering, also known as Maine Ocean School. I serve on the Board as the designee of the University of Maine System Chancellor. The UMS has a permanent seat in statute on the board because of the important connections between the Maine Ocean School's programming and that of Maine's public universities, especially the University of Maine, where I am the director of the Maine Sea Grant program and a Professor of Marine Sciences. I am grateful to the university for allowing me to dedicate time to the board, and to bring my passion, expertise and experience in world-class marine science education, research and workforce training to the development of this school.

As defined in statute, our school serves high achieving students who desire a career connected to the ocean. You will hear from some of them today and you should have also received written testimony from one of our first graduates, who is now enrolled at Maine Maritime Academy and attributes his success (his first semester GPA was 3.98) to the preparation he received at Maine Ocean School.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on the last time I was before this Committee. It was on March 4th 2020, just two weeks before Maine essentially shut-down due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. At that session, the Committee provided us a two-year time frame to re-consider the model of the school. Days later, like so many other public schools in the state, we made the unplanned transition to high-quality virtual instruction, which you will hear about from students momentarily. As our students and educators were adapting and thriving in this new teaching and learning environment, our Board began deeply considering the Committee's recommendations, culminating in July with the Governance Committee recommending to the full Board that we continue to operate the school as a magnet school, as originally intended and affirmed last session and how it can best serve Maine students.

Along with these activities we have been collectively working on a strategic plan, a draft of which has been provided to the Committee. The plan includes several components, the first of which was to work with the Maine Department of Education to provide a more equitable funding formula for a growing school, which we successfully did this spring with the assistance of Representative Cuddy.

The plan also outlined the importance of bringing in tuition students virtually and now we have two. and eventually to grow further by establishing a residential option for students. We still plan to



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

build further partnerships with technical Centers (we already have students attending the Waldo County Center) and we continue to partner with other industry and academic organizations for funding and resources for specific learning activities, e.g., submission of grants in partnership with UMaine researchers.

We are proud of this progress and know it is important for the sustainability and growth of the school, and our state. Maine Ocean School is situated on Penobscot Bay in just the right place for our students to learn from and develop solutions to the myriad of issues currently facing our oceans, including water quality concerns, opportunities for offshore wind and aquaculture development.

I know you will have questions about the school's academic programming that I and others who will come after me can answer. What I want you to know is that the school is finally flourishing with the new budget structure, the arrival of out-of-state students, and being on the verge of ship-based opportunities. But to continually have the threat of closure is taking the wind out of our sails and hampering enrollment and fundraising efforts when they are needed most. Please remove the sunset clause and allow us to continue to develop, grow and most importantly, help Maine students who are passionate about the sea realize their full potential.

Please vote OUGHT TO PASS on this bill.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gayle B. Zydlewski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "G".

Gayle B. Zydlewski
Chair, Maine Ocean School Board of Trustees

Gayle Zydlewski
Hampden

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Gayle Zydlewski, I live in Hampden. I am the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Maine School for Marine Science, Technology, Transportation, and Engineering, also known as Maine Ocean School. I serve on the Board as the designee of the University of Maine System Chancellor. The UMS has a permanent seat in statute on the board because of the important connections between the Maine Ocean School's programming and that of Maine's public universities, especially the University of Maine, where I am the director of the Maine Sea Grant program and a Professor of Marine Sciences. I am grateful to the university for allowing me to dedicate time to the board, and to bring my passion, expertise and experience in world-class marine science education, research and workforce training to the development of this school.

As defined in statute, our school serves high achieving students who desire a career connected to the ocean. You will hear from some of them today and you should have also received written testimony from one of our first graduates, who is now enrolled at Maine Maritime Academy and attributes his success (his first semester GPA was 3.98) to the preparation he received at Maine Ocean School.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on the last time I was before this Committee. It was on March 4th 2020, just two weeks before Maine essentially shut-down due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. At that session, the Committee provided us a two-year time frame to re-consider the model of the school. Days later, like so many other public schools in the state, we made the unplanned transition to high-quality virtual instruction, which you will hear about from students momentarily. As our students and educators were adapting and thriving in this new teaching and learning environment, our Board began deeply considering the Committee's recommendations, culminating in July with the Governance Committee recommending to the full Board that we continue to operate the school as a magnet school, as originally intended and affirmed last session and how it can best serve Maine students.

Along with these activities we have been collectively working on a strategic plan, a draft of which has been provided to the Committee. The plan includes several components, the first of which was to work with the Maine Department of Education to provide a more equitable funding formula for a growing school, which we successfully did this spring with the assistance of Representative Cuddy.

The plan also outlined the importance of bringing in tuition students virtually and now we have two. and eventually to grow further by establishing a residential option for students. We still plan to build further partnerships with technical Centers (we already have students attending the Waldo County Center) and we continue to partner with other industry and academic organizations for funding and resources for specific learning activities, e.g., submission of grants in partnership with UMaine researchers.

We are proud of this progress and know it is important for the sustainability and growth of the school, and our state. Maine Ocean School is situated on Penobscot Bay in just the right place for our students to learn from and develop solutions to the myriad of issues currently facing our oceans, including water quality concerns, opportunities for offshore wind and aquaculture development.

I know you will have questions about the school's academic programming that I and others who will come after me can answer. What I want you to know is that the school is finally flourishing with the new budget structure, the arrival of out-of-state students, and being on the verge of ship-based opportunities. But to continually have the threat of closure is taking the wind out of our sails and hampering enrollment and fundraising efforts when they are needed most, Please remove the sunset clause and allow us to continue to develop, grow and most importantly, help Maine students who are passionate about the sea realize their full potential.

Please vote OUGHT TO PASS on this bill.
Thank you for your time,

Gayle B. Zydlewski