

April 27, 2021

TO: Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

FROM: Dr. Jim McClymer, Physics & Astronomy, University of Maine & AFUM President

RE: Support for:LD 1253 *An Act to Add a Faculty Member and Nonfaculty Member to the Board of Trustees of the University of Maine System* (Representative Millett);

& LD 1391 *An Act to Enhance the Educational Expertise and Knowledge of the Board of Trustees of the University of Maine System* (Representative Collings)

I am Jim McClymer, a resident of Glenburn, physics professor at the University of Maine, and President of the faculty union, AFUM. While I do hope to testify in person, I have classes and may not be able to remain until I am called. If not inappropriate to ask, I would like to be invited to the work session.

I am in support of both bills 1253 & 1391, recognizing that the number of faculty and staff trustees is different in both bills. From my experience, I suggest the minimal number of faculty and staff trustees be at least the same as long utilized at the University of Oregon and University of West Virginia. Both systems have 2 faculty trustees and 1 staff trustee. Given the overwhelming number of people on the Board with little relevant higher education experience, I think the numbers should be increased beyond the minimal number.

It is easy to have a simple and negative knee-jerk response to the idea of putting faculty and staff on the Board. Yet if you understand the purpose of the Board, which is not the day-to-day running of the universities, the need for practical, living experience becomes obvious.

I organized a meeting with UMS faculty & staff with faculty and staff trustees from the University of Oregon and then the University of West Virginia. These trustees spoke of both the dedication of the other board members while recognizing that they, while perhaps experts in their fields of law or business, did not understand the nuances in higher education. The faculty & staff trustees spoke of how welcoming and appreciative the other board members, as well as administration, were of the faculty and staff experiences. **This is a key point**, the Board membership and leadership welcomed having them as full members, realizing that without the faculty/staff as members, their incomplete understanding could, and sometimes would, lead to negative consequences for their institutions in spite of the Board's good intention.

I do hope that UMS will not claim that faculty representatives **to** the Board fill the same function as trustees, as that is untrue. Board reps are excluded from much; they often do not get to talk until spoken to, and have virtually no input in the crucial stages where ideas are fermenting into proposals and action items. Once things have gotten that far, institutional inertia makes it difficult to question, often wrong, assumptions, or to consider alternative means of accomplishing a worthwhile goal. The result is the System, and the people of Maine, suffer.

Nor can the UMS administration be expected to serve academics as administrators often have their own ambition, even if it is just to chalk up a win or a mark for the CV. By giving faculty and staff full BoT seats the State can help ensure that policies will be more grounded in reality and truly fulfilling the multiple missions of the universities.

A quality university would welcome a formal faculty and staff voice. While I do not know as I write this testimony the intent of UMS, I suspect they may use scare tactics about the "fox in the hen house", and that faculty & staff will only be looking out for increasing their own pay. Having been a faculty member for three decades and working with hundreds of my colleagues, such a categorization is absolutely false. If UMS followed accreditation standards, the Board is not heavily involved in negotiations as that is a management responsibility. Given the number of board members, no voting block of faculty and staff could win any vote. What faculty and staff get by being board members is being heard in a new way for Maine, heard so that other board members can grow in knowledge and understanding; not just take the Systems word for things. While it is too late for Maine to lead in this area, Maine can choose to join the leaders.

I am pasting testimony that I was asked to share with the committee from some faculty/staff trustees from the University of Oregon.

- Thank you for this opportunity. I won't pretend to know what is best for the University of Maine system but hope the experiences and perspectives I touch on in this statement prove helpful. I have seen the value of campus-based trustees both for my fellow trustees and the greater campus community. For my fellow trustees I have found that my most important contribution is a sense of the current or anticipated campus climate around policy under consideration. When our Board meets, I am often asked by our at-large trustees who wish to hear the on-the-ground sentiments about the items on the agenda. This contribution extends from policy discussion through presidential evaluations and in everything in between. For members of the campus community, having a colleague on the board allows for a greater sense of inclusion and consideration during discussions around the direction of the institution. I meet regularly with my staff colleagues to inform them and, importantly, learn from them. In addition, given my particular role on campus as a student supervisor, I also get a look into the often times difficult reality of the whole student experience. I work with students experiencing home insecurity, food insecurity, domestic conflict, and a myriad of other tensions and difficulties. I often time see the same students multiple times a week for years. I get to watch them grow, fail, and succeed. I believe this perspective is also valuable for my colleagues on the board.

Jimmy Murray
Technology Specialist & Student Supervisor
Staff trustee at the University of Oregon

- A cornerstone of leadership models in institutions of higher education is faculty shared governance. Faculty voices and perspectives are critical to making decisions that affect the institution. As such, encouraging faculty perspectives in decision-making, as well as

student, staff, and community input, is an important element of governance. Leadership models, including those at the governing board level, that include myriad voices and lived experiences provide a more inclusive context for governance.

Laura Lee McIntyre, Ph.D., BCBA-D
Director, Prevention Science Institute Special Education and Clinical Sciences
Faculty Trustee, University of Oregon