

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

My name is Lydia Savage and I am a resident of Portland. I am also Professor of Geography at the University of Southern Maine and President of the USM chapter of the Affiliated Faculties of the Universities of Maine which represents full-time faculty.

I am writing in support of both:

LD 1391 - An Act To Enhance the Educational Expertise and Knowledge of the Board of Trustees of the University of Maine System and

LD 1253 - An Act To Add a Faculty Member and Nonfaculty Staff Member to the Board of Trustees of the University of Maine System

The current composition of the Board of Trustees for the University of Maine system excludes faculty and staff. Each campus send a faculty representative to the UMS Board of Trustees but those representatives are excluded from executive sessions and are not allowed to vote. There is a student trustee appointed by the Governor who IS included in executive session and does have a vote. I am happy to see the UMS Board of Trustees include the student experience and knowledge.

UMS Board of Trustees should also include the frontline workers of the university system who teach the classes, advise students, counsel them on financial aid and housing, mentor their research and create and deliver the curriculum - among many other things. We are in direct contact with students and see how policies affect our students, coworkers, universities and communities first hand.

Many of the faculty in UMS serve on accreditation teams for regional and national accreditation agencies, their disciplinary accrediting bodies and are recognized experts in pedagogy, student success, curriculum development and delivery and policy. Our expertise is often not even asked for as UMS hires consultants or the Board create policies that do not have the desired outcomes - board oversight with good intentions and on the ground outcomes are two very different things.

We are in the final week of classes in our second full semester of teaching in a pandemic. We have retained out students and seen them through to completion and that is down to faculty and staff spending an inordinate amount of time reaching out and communicating with students. This is a critical time for higher education and the State of Maine cannot afford to not utilize every bit of knowledge, expertise and commitment to UMS that they can find.

Lydia Savage, Ph.D.
Professor of Geography
Chair, Geography-Anthropology
University of Southern Maine

