

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Blake Whitaker, I am a resident of Auburn and I teach at the University of Southern Maine. Additionally, I am a department chair and the outgoing chair of the USM Faculty Senate. I appear today in enthusiastic support of LD 1391 "An Act to Enhance the Educational Expertise ... of the Board of Trustees of the University of Maine System".

I am the proud son of a carpenter and a homemaker, a first generation college graduate of Bates College (Bachelor of Science), received my PhD in epidemiology & public health from Yale University, a former research fellow at Harvard Medical School, and a grateful tenured faculty member of USM.

I find the lack of faculty representation on the UMS Board to be a surprising failure of the State and Board to take advantage of the academic expertise which they acknowledge when awarding tenure. I salute the multiple interests and aptitudes represented on the current Board and acknowledge the gravity of the responsibility placed on the Board to ensure the delivery of a high quality education to the System's thousands of students during a time of multiple challenges.

However, I cannot conceive of a rational explanation for the ABSENCE of University faculty from full Board membership. Achieving tenure requires not only recognized and productive expertise in a particular subject, but also the documented promotion of student learning and effective university and community service. Such accomplishments provide a highly relevant and qualifying background for service on the UMS Board of Trustees. To ignore this vast pool of Board-certified educational expertise is akin to paying for the services of a physician, lawyer, or carpenter and then disregarding their advice/refusing their services.

These are pivotal moments in all higher education. PLEASE support LD 1391 in this Committee and in the Legislature so as to increase the State's return on investment in AFUM and MEA faculty by mandating their additional service by membership on the University of Maine's Board of Trustees.

THANK YOU

Blake