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LD 1656

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and the honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, an opportunity for the State of Maine and the University of Maine system has come up in this legislature. I am of course referring to LD 1656, An Act to Allow Student Governance within the University of Maine System. This Act would add a voting student member to the Board of Trustees for each campus and school that is a part of the University of Maine system in order to ensure that the voice and quality of life are taken into account. In the past, the University of Maine system has lobbied against Student Workers' interests, consistently paid graduate student workers wages too low to live off of, and has allowed for the worsening condition of dorms on campus. All of this is underscored by the fact that students pay the most out of any single group in funding the University system and yet we have no vote on the Board of Trustees. At this time I would like to address some of my personal experiences with the University of Maine that I feel highlight these issues. I transferred to the University of Maine Orono back in 2021 and when I did I was met with a campus with a nice-looking exterior and complaints about by students on the interior. Roads with consistent potholes, people slipping on frozen and salted sidewalks, and exit signs hanging from the ceilings of dorms with their wires exposed. All of these things are not secrets that were kept away in remote corners of the campus, they are a common complaint by much of the student body, and yet little is done about them and the University does very little to communicate with their student body about these issues and even if they are aware of them. Having a student voice that is intimately aware of what it's like to live on campus will make sure that awareness is kept in conversations about how the University runs so that these issues can be addressed sooner and with more on-the-ground information. I truly urge all members of this committee to support LD 1656, Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Lucca Hamina