

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

I am writing to let you know the importance of LD1458 - An Act to Increase funding for the Maine School of Science and Mathematics. As a parent, I can attest to the impact of MSSM on my own child. As someone who has recently had honor of working to connect with hundreds of MSSM alumni to document their educational and career paths I can speak to the impact on many other Maine students, and as a long time employee, I can speak to the impact flat funding has had on MSSM's ability to deliver it's exceptional program.

From a young age, our son Stephen was intensely curious and imaginative but regarded school, even kindergarten, as a task. That all changed for him at MSSM where he truly found his place. He had walked into the doors with little confidence and emerged two years later with his head held high equipped with the social and academic skills for success. The rigor combined with the support of staff and peers was truly transformative for him. As a parent I will be forever grateful.

At the same time, I must admit that had I not received employee benefits, our family would have seen the cost of attending MSSM prohibitive, given the anticipation of upcoming college costs. We likely would not have qualified for financial aid, but without knowing in advance how impactful MSSM would be for our son we would not have been in a position to appreciate its true value.

Given the median household income in Maine is just over \$63,000, MSSM's \$9,800 current room and board fee prevents students and families from considering MSSM as an option and decreases equity. This is in stark contrast to the room and board subsidies other states with similar institutions provide for families. LD1458 - An Act to Increase Funding for the Maine School of Science and Mathematics would remove this barrier for Maine Families.

And our son is just one. As I have connected with other alumni from the pioneer class to recent graduates, it has been amazing to see the depths and breadths of their accomplishments. Hailing from all sixteen Maine counties, they are doctors, lawyers, educators, programmers, managers, engineers, counselors, entrepreneurs, the list goes on and on. Here in Maine many work in government, education, non-profit, large and small businesses. A recurring theme I hear is not only the schools they attended and the degrees they earned, but the research, teaching, and learning opportunities in college their MSSM experiences had uniquely prepared them for. And now they are integral parts of the workforce in Maine, the Nation, and beyond.

But without the passage of LD1458 - An Act to Increase Funding for the Maine School of Science and Mathematics, this gem in the crown of Maine is at risk. As someone who has worked for MSSM for over 25 years, I am in a position to speak in earnest about how flat funding has impacted MSSM where virtually every department of the school has seen cuts over the past six years, eliminating and reducing key positions in administration, finance, admissions, teaching, special education, and residential life.

While I have not been personally impacted by these cuts, I have seen the strain on the remaining workforce who have creatively gone above and beyond to fill the gaps. It is not sustainable and will impact MSSM's ability to attract and retain its talented and dedicated staff. I strongly urge you to pass LD1458 and work with your colleagues to fully fund the bill to preserve the magic of MSSM for Maine's future leaders.

Sincerely,
Deborah McGann, Presque Isle, Maine

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LD 1458

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