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I have been teaching a one semester Personal Finance course at Cape Elizabeth High School for 15 years and have always thought it should be required for graduation. Financial literacy and an understanding of how to successfully navigate a myriad of financial challenges is absolutely essential for high school students. Year after year, I have watched students transform from clueless and insecure about managing money to confident, knowledgeable masters of their own destiny! They have no idea how much things cost, how to build a budget or negotiate loans, leases, or car buying.. When the semester ends, they can use spreadsheets to collect, interpret and chart all types of data, make projections and forecast multiple scenarios. They are comfortable with financial concepts and empowered by new-found understanding.

It is one of the most rewarding classes I teach. We want our students to enter the real world with real skills - skills that can help them become contributing members of society. We want them to understand debt, know how to avoid it or get out of it when needed. They can't help support economic growth if they aren't able to navigate their own financial situations.

These students learn the golden rule of Personal Finance is to "Pay Yourself First", to invest in the future and how to mitigate unforeseen challenges.

I hope this committee understands Maine's investment in Personal Finance education provides ALL students with a chance at success. Please ensure they have the financial tools to guide them there. Thank you.