

Susan Bartlett
Limington
LD 632

I am writing to request your support for LD 632 The Social Work Loan Repayment Program. My name is Susan Bartlett, LCSW, CCM, CBIS, from Limington Maine and I am 67 years old and semi-retired. This bill is important because Maine needs to recruit and retain Social Workers to meet the increasing need for behavioral health care and treatment for both children and adults. I graduated from the University of Southern Maine with a Bachelors degree in Social Welfare. I moved to California to and established in-State residency to avoid debt in completing a Masters Degree in Social Welfare Organization, Planning and Administration from the University of California, Berkeley in 1983. In 1987 I returned to Maine and have had an exciting career in brain injury rehabilitation and rehabilitation counseling. I continue to work at New England Rehabilitation Hospital 4-6 days per month as a per diem Case Manager.

All Masters level Social Workers are required to complete 6 years of University level course work. Clinical Social Workers must complete an additional 2 years of supervised practice prior to becoming licensed. Our work is personally demanding and is among the 10 least paid professional occupations nationally. COVID and the Opioid Epidemic have highlighted the critical need for mental health services and the inadequate number of professionals to meet these challenges. This bill to assist with student loan repayment will benefit new clinicians and community social workers and the populations of Maine residents who desperately need them. Many young people are struggling to pay for housing and basic needs. Those who want to become Social Workers need a financial incentive to pursue a career that is meaningful and critically important to society, but pays less than many alternative career paths. Thank you.