

Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business
c/o Legislative Information Office
Cross Building, Room 206
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 632: An Act to Amend the Social Work Education Loan Repayment Program

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Craft, and other members of the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business,

My name is Hannah Lindstrom and I am a senior at The University of Maine, Orono. I am majoring in social work and pursuing a minor in interdisciplinary disability studies. I have been a student at The University of Maine, Orono since 2018. I am from North Attleboro, Massachusetts. However, I spent my summers at my family's home in Hartland, Maine. I will be completing my undergraduate degree in May 2023. I have spent an excessive amount of time recently trying to plan for my postgraduate degree life. My hope would be to move to Portland, ME and work as a social worker. However, based on the recent inflation of rent and the fact that I have over \$60,000 worth of student loans hanging over my head, this seems like an unrealistic goal. This loan forgiveness could change my life. It could change my peers' lives.

As some of you may know, social work is an extremely rewarding career. However, there are not many options for job positions that will pay me enough to afford my normal living expenses and my monthly student loan payments. While being a full time college student, I am working 3 part time jobs which averages to about 25 hours a week, I have an unpaid social work internship that I average 16 hours a week at, and I also spend many weekends out of the year traveling back and forth from Massachusetts to care for my mother with Multiple Sclerosis.

I know that my passion is to be a social worker. I have been doing my internship at The Yellow Tulip Project which is based out of Portland, ME. The Yellow Tulip Project focuses on smashing the stigma surrounding mental illness, advocating for suicide prevention and creating positive mental health based arts programming for students in Maine. My hope is to eventually work for The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. However, I know that I will not be able to make the amount of money as a social worker that I could make as a bartender in a busy area like Portland, ME. However, I would like to make a meaningful difference to the residents of the state of Maine and assist with the mental health crisis right in front of us.

I am in **favor** of LD 632 and I urge you to **vote “yes” on LD 632** too.

Thank you for your time.

With respect,

Hannah Lindstrom

Social Work Student at The University of Maine, Orono