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To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to express my support for LD 1010- An Act to Establish the Maine Service Fellows program. I came to Maine as a student at Bowdoin College and stayed in the state because of the opportunities afforded to me by a similar service fellows program offered by the Island Institute- the Island Fellows Program. This program benefited me tremendously as a recent college graduate- allowing me to build my skills, contribute to and feel a sense of community, and build a professional network that still serves me today. However, it also benefited the community I was placed in. My service site was in Port Clyde (where I currently live and am a homeowner). In a community where most of the people who move in are retirees, I was able to bring a different perspective and energy. In addition to my work at Herring Gut Learning Center (my official service site), I also volunteered at the library and for a youth mentoring organization called Trekkers and tutored students in the local schools. The additional capacity and enthusiasm I brought to the community extended well beyond my service site.

As a young person in my early 20s beginning my service with the Island Fellows program, I didn't expect to stay in Maine, let alone Port Clyde. However, I fell in love with the sense of community, the culture, the strong network of support that is present in small rural communities. Over 10 years later, I have made Maine my permanent home and I attribute this directly to my experience in the Fellows program which allowed me to become fully immersed in a community, develop intergenerational friendships, and pursue meaningful work.