



DATE: April 7, 2021
TO: Committee on State and Local Government
FROM: Samantha Warren, UMS Director of Government & Community Relations
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RE: **LD 1010, An Act To Establish the Maine Service Fellows Program**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government: I am writing today on behalf of the University of Maine System (UMS) in support of LD 1010, *An Act To Establish the Maine Service Fellows Program*.

Maine's public universities applaud the concept of a service corps, as proposed by this bill. Public service, after all, is a cornerstone of our tripartite mission that also includes teaching and research and the three are often integrated with many of our degree programs requiring a service learning component (e.g. student teaching, nursing clinicals, architecture real projects, etc.)

Members of our campus communities embrace giving back, as evidenced by our COVID response to local and state needs, from hand sanitizer production by University of Maine chemical engineers to volunteer vaccine administration this spring by more than 250 UMaine, University of Southern Maine, University of Maine at Fort Kent and University of Maine at Presque Isle nursing students. Meanwhile through the University of Maine School of Law's Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, our law students annually provide nearly 14,000 hours of pro bono legal services to Mainers in-need, including in the areas of general practice, prisoner assistance, juvenile justice, refugee and human rights, and protection from abuse.

This spirit of service on our campuses and in the community follows our graduates. According to a recent survey of UMaine alumni, 70% who live in Maine reported volunteering within the past year, compared to 35% of Maine's overall population. The Maine Service Fellows Program would provide another pathway for UMS graduates to meaningfully contribute to our communities.

This proposal is also exciting for its potential to retain the talent developed by the UMS in Maine. With more than 6,000 out-of-state students coming to our universities each year, we are likely the largest importer of new talent, which is essential to growing the size and skill of the state's workforce – consistent with the 10-year economic plan. We work hard to help our graduates see a future for themselves in Maine, and to cultivate the knowledge, skills and relationships to be successful here. While the vast majority of our graduates do stay in Maine to live, work and contribute to our communities – including some who originally came to our universities from other states – we hear constant concerns from our students and new alumni about the opportunities here for them. This is reflected in that UMaine alumni survey, in which 80% of Black Bears currently living outside of Maine reported that job prospects influenced their decision to leave.

The program proposed by LD 1010 would create another opportunity for our students to stay in Maine, and continue building appreciation for the state and connections that could lead to career and civic opportunities after their fellowship.

Five years ago, Maine Law started a similar initiative to address a severe shortage of attorneys in rural regions. The school places law students in rural firms for paid summer fellowships, knowing that direct exposure to rural places and practice will inspire students to consider pursuing careers

in those communities they may have previously overlooked. Maine Law graduates, including those originally from out-of-state, are now working full-time in Aroostook, Piscataquis and Somerset counties as a result of their positive short-term fellowship experiences. One could imagine similar success stories of fellows from the program created by LD 1010 settling long-term where they served.

We are appreciative that Rep. Rielly has been responsive to our request to remove the reference in the original bill to a UMS in-state tuition pricing bonus for those who complete their tenure of service. [UMS policy](#) already provides that individuals who have been in Maine for 12 consecutive months for purposes other than education are eligible for in-state tuition, including in our graduate and law programs.

We encourage your support of this bill and look forward to promoting the opportunities it creates to our students, while also working with the Commission to develop pathways that link this service to UMS graduate programs. Thank you for allowing me to testify today and I look forward to answering your questions.