

Hello Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and honorable members of the State and Local Government Committee. I am Jacob Hinz. and I am a third-year Political Science major at the University of Maine-Orono. Thank you for allowing me to express my support for LD 1016: An Act to Support College Student Participation as Policy Interns for State Legislators.

This semester, I am serving as a policy intern for Representative Laurie Osher. I spend between 5 and 10 hours a week on tasks assigned by Representative Osher. I'm enrolled in an American Politics Internship (POS 493). The faculty member who manages the policy internship course is Professor Robert Glover.

I support this bill because I believe that legislators should have the opportunity to hire college students to be policy interns, and I believe that students should have the opportunity to be paid to work as policy interns for legislators. The students will be able to learn about how bills move through the legislature, from cloture to floor votes. The legislators will also be able to learn from the student interns. We (traditional-age college students) grew up on the internet and are skilled at using computers and communicating with social media. As an intern for Representative Osher, I've assisted her in investigating how other states and businesses in those states manage information about pesticide sales and use. In this way, I'm enabling her to be better prepared to present her bill proposing the creation of a pesticide sales and use database.

The most important reason for passing this bill is to create a stronger and more democratic legislature. Maine's citizen legislators are paid very little, and they do not have their own staff. Each legislator shares one staff person with many other legislators. Student interns will expand the support available to legislators, augmenting the assistance each legislator has from their legislative aid assigned by leadership.

The student interns who volunteered their time and effort this session to assist Representative Osher are grateful to have the opportunity to help and to learn. Still, this opportunity isn't available to students who must use their off hours to earn money. Ideally, the legislature will actively encourage student participation by providing wages for the hours worked by students. LD 1016 proposes a way for students from all economic sectors to participate.

We've already seen at the national level that there is still plenty of potential for American democracy to fall apart. Pretender George Santos perpetrated fraud on voters and used the millions of dollars donated to him by corporate interests to defeat a top fundraising democrat in New York while using a fake name and fabricating his entire life. I hope that this won't happen in Maine.

Supporting interns who want to help their communities by serving as policy interns is a good way to encourage young people to learn about the legislative process and to consider running for office. Maine needs to help develop future policymakers – and to avoid grifters like Santos from arising in the Maine legislature by encouraging greater participation through internships. The result can only be good for democratic rule.

Jacob Hinz  
Orono  
LD 1016

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