

April 6, 2015

Dear Maine State Legislators,

My name is Patrick Nason and currently I am a first year student at the University of Maine in Orono and a Social Work major. I am a graduate of the TRIO Upward Bound Math Science program at the University of Maine. I come from a low-income household and I am a first generation college student, which means that neither of my parents attended college. In addition, I will be the first person to graduate with a four year degree in my entire immediate family. This is a very big deal for my family and by attending college, I am showing my younger siblings that college is possible. Eventually, I will show them that I can earn a good living by having a degree.

When it came to being able to pay for my schooling, I was afraid I would not receive enough financial aid. I had to go through the process of declaring an independent override on my FAFSA as I couldn't live with my parents while in high school. When I finally got my financial aid package, I was both relieved and worried. I was relieved because I got enough financial aid to pay for much of my tuition, room and board. I only had to pay \$400 out of my own pocket plus pay for my books and daily living expenses. But I was worried because most of the aid I received was in loans. My package included \$8,430 in grants. Among these grants I received \$1,000 from the State of Maine Grant. But I then had to compare this to the \$10,900 I got in loans. I have to pay back every cent of the loans at some point. Clearly, needs-based grant aid is not enough to cover the cost of attending college. I am attending school to study social work, and I intend to work in the TRIO programs when I graduate. I realize that by going into this field of work I will not be making a lot of money and this will make it very difficult to pay back these loans, especially after they have accrued over the time it takes for me to get through graduate school.

The bill LD 627 "An Act to Make College More Affordable for Maine Residents" is very important and will help a lot of Maine students, just like me, be able to afford college. By making college more affordable, it will allow students from low-income homes to have a fighting chance earning a degree and do what I am trying to do which is making a better life for themselves and their future family.

Sincerely,

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