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**TO: Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**

FROM: David Daigler, President, Maine Community College System

RE: Statement in support of the Maine Community College System's portion of LD 206: An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023

Part A - 7

DATE: January 25, 2023

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, please accept this memo as our testimony to explain how the Maine Community College System uses the funds commonly called "Racino Funds" to provide financial support to our students in need.

LD 206 has an adjustment to our allocation based on revised revenue forecasts. The adjustment adds \$356,305 to our Racino funds. This is very welcome news after the decrease in these crucial funds during the pandemic.

Our students are often balancing on a very narrow financial ledge. One car repair, one medical bill or an increase in childcare or housing costs can tip them over the edge and force them to drop out of college. This sometimes happens with just one or two classes left before earning a credential that will allow them to enter the workforce making a family living wage and starting on a lucrative career. These students have often sacrificed and poured their heart into their learning and are left with precious little to show for it. The student supports we can provide allow them to continue their education and become self-sufficient, proud Maine residents.

In Fiscal Year 2022, MCCS awarded more than 2,150 scholarships totaling \$2.1 million. Per Maine Statute, grants are need-based and provide financial assistance to students to support student success (attraction and retention) or childcare needs. To benefit from these need-based grants, a student must be:

- Matriculated, or plan to matriculate, in a program of study.
- Maine resident.
- Able to demonstrate financial need.

Below you will find some examples of the types of programs offered by our colleges that allow students to access these funds:

College Works for ME is intended to strengthen MCCS student retention and completion by fostering greater engagement in campus life, providing access to campus employers who can serve as mentors to students, and offering the opportunity for students to gain valuable work experience tied to programs of study. Additional benefits of the program include:

- The ability of a student to build a work schedule around his or her academic schedule,
- The ability to forge stronger connections between the student and his or her college community, and
- The ability to earn pay to assist with the cost of college.

Momentum at the Start:

Momentum from the Start provides free summer classes to high school graduates who have committed to attending a community college in the fall. This program helps students get acclimated to college life and decreases “summer melt,” when some students lose their initiative over the summer and do not show up for fall classes.

Adult Education:

This unique partnership with the Adult Education Department of MDOE provides adult education students a chance to take one college course while fully supported by their adult ed mentor. Maine Department of Education funds the textbooks for these students. Taking this one course before formally matriculating into college helps students build the confidence and academic skills needed to be successful in college. Also signals our willingness to support and invest in those seeking to return to formal education.

Embark Scholarships

Embark students have worked regularly with a MCCS pre-college advisor in the final year of high school and are more likely to face multiple barriers to attending college. These scholarships are often used for costs beyond tuition & fees (textbooks, equipment, room & board, etc.).

Scholarships are contingent on full-time enrollment, continuous enrollment, and regular meetings with the advisor. Embark students have historically been more likely graduate on time compared to other matriculated students.

The Maine Community College System is grateful for the support we receive from the Maine Legislature and the Administration and will be providing more comprehensive information as the biennial budget work gets underway. Thank you for your time and attention.