



# *City of Presque Isle, Maine*

The Office of Executive Director  
Presque Isle Industrial Council

**Thomas w. Powers**

Email: TomP@pgiic.com

February 13, 2023

Dear Senators Rotundo and Rafferty, Representatives Sachs and Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations & Financial Affairs and Education & Cultural Affairs,

Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity to speak about why support for our university system is critical to Maine's economic future and the stabilization of its workforce.

My name is Tom Powers and I hold the position of Executive Director of the Presque Isle Industrial Council and serve as the Vice Chair of the University of Maine at Presque Isle Board of Visitors. My family has lived in Presque Isle since it was incorporated in 1859. I'm an UMPI alumnus and my son graduated with two Bachelor's degrees from the University of Maine at Fort Kent. Both of us chose to attend these institutions because they allowed us to attain a high quality—and affordable—post-secondary education in our desired work fields while staying in the part of the state we call home.

I believe my past work experiences and current roles allow me to deliver an honest viewpoint regarding the critical importance of these two institutions to northern Maine, and, by extension, all of our University of Maine System campuses, in developing the workforce Maine needs to grow and thrive.

UMPI and UMFk have the physical and human assets needed to train students for success in today's work environment. They are committed to career readiness efforts in and out of the classroom. UMFk programs like Forestry and Nursing and UMPI programs like Medical Laboratory Technology and Physical Therapist Assistant are producing students recruited even before they graduate. Our universities' proven ability to adapt to tomorrow's workplace requirements is one of the most important ways they define their true value to Maine's future.

Take the GIS offerings at UMPI. GIS has become an integral part of Maine's economic development activities and is used daily by almost every municipality and entity focused on economic development. At UMPI, students learn by using state-of-the-art GIS technology and take on real-world projects that not only prepare them for the workforce, but also benefit the community in tangible and long lasting ways. In Presque Isle, we use GIS databases created by UMPI students to help with identifying public works infrastructures that aid in our planning and zoning activities. Through a partnership among the 7 campuses of the University of Maine System and state agencies to include industries, and communities the Maine Geospatial Institute efforts make these informational depositories possible for statewide use.

Consider also UMPI's Agricultural Science and Agribusiness program, designed to strengthen Maine's ability to grow in the increasingly complex and profitable field of agriculture, especially sustainable agriculture. The shift across the country of increased food production due to climate

12 Second Street      Presque Isle, ME 04769-2459      Phone: 207.760.2785      Fax 207.764.2501

*The City of Presque Isle is an equal opportunity provider. To file a complaint, write to Human Resources, 12 Second Street Presque Isle, ME 04769, or call (207) 760-2700.*

change is already underway and Maine is becoming a larger player in this transition. Northern Maine farming is now a multi-million-dollar industry at the grower's level and a billion-dollar industry at the processor level. UMPI's AgScience program is targeting young people from this area to work and help grow this industry, training them in the latest ag technologies, and providing opportunities to learn from industry leaders, which helps ensure that Maine becomes an even bigger partner in this growth. UMPI AgScience alums like Cody Theriault have been able to conduct industry-impacting research, stay in the industry locally after graduation, and apply their own research findings in their daily work.

Imagine how continued education and research investment will allow UMPI to grow these programs and efforts like these. An investment in the University of Maine System is an investment in the vitality and the future of rural regions like Aroostook County; it's an investment in our universities' ability to provide an affordable education that prepares people for the workforce, help to keep individuals within our communities, and to provide a time honored and respected institution in the communities they are located while supporting local jobs and economies.

I am requesting your support regarding education and research funding for the FY 24-25 Biennial Budget to help us ensure the future growth of Maine.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Tom Powers  
Executive Director, Presque Isle Industrial Council