

Michael Grillo
Penobscot
LD 512

Greetings, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee.

My name is Dr Michael Grillo and I am a Mediaeval Art Historian at the University of Maine. I am here to testify in support of LD 512, An Act to Promote Student Enrollment and Degree Completion in the University of Maine System by Providing Tuition Waivers to Eligible Students. Let me start by thanking the Legislature and Governor for its consideration of LD 477, An Act to Support Higher Education by Providing Funds to Maine's Community Colleges, but only as part of a broader package to support Higher Education in general, which would entail enacting LD 512 as well. Maine needs a well educated workforce in all fields, whether in jobs for which Community Colleges prepare their students, or in professions requiring four-year degrees or even graduate studies. Looking to support only the Community Colleges undermines the larger needs of the state in limiting the fields in which students can excel.

While some Community College students do continue on to four-year programmes, they represent only around 3.5 to possibly 5 percent of their students, according to the Community College's web-site. A recent Bangor Daily News article noted that Maine has done better than other states in slowing the decrease in Community College transfers to four-year universities, but that those numbers still are decreasing. While students who do transfer may do well in the University System, they typically do so at a disadvantage in needing more than two additional years to complete their degrees, for many areas of study require a series of courses that start in the first or second years of their curricula. Because of their cumulative series of courses with their necessary prerequisites, these programmes cannot compress their curricula into just the Junior and Senior years. Only starting students' education at a four-year university will allow them to complete their degree in four years.

The Community Colleges and the University of Maine System should not be pitted in competition with each other, but rather serve as complements to one another to ensure that Maine offers its students educations focussed to the fullest range of careers that can ensure Maine's economic success and inviting vibrant culture for all of its citizens.