



Senator Mattie Daughtry
Assistant Majority Leader
3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0003
Office (207) 287-1515

Testimony of Senator Mattie Daughtry introducing
LD 447, An Act to Support Higher Education in Maine by Providing Funds to
Maine's Community Colleges
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
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Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Mattie Daughtry, and I proudly represent Senate District 23, which includes Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth. Today I am pleased to introduce my bill LD 447, “An Act to Support Higher Education in Maine by Providing Funds to Maine’s Community Colleges.”

As you know, the Governor allocated funding for a 4.5% increase and additional funds to continue the free community college initiative to include the Maine high school graduating classes of 2024 and 2025. During the public hearing for the Maine Community College System portion of the biennial budget, President Daigler expressed support for the 4.5% and the free community college initiative. He also [requested](#) an additional \$5 million to support student success.

To paraphrase President Daigler, this funding would be “crucial” for MCCS to “meet the increased emotional, academic, and financial needs of [its] students.” He also explained how MCCS’ “non-traditional” students are older, receive some form of grant aid, and are more likely to be first-generation college students. In other words, they have many obligations and responsibilities, including caring for their children (or finding and affording child care), looking after their aging parents (which is something I’m personally starting to do), paying increasing rent, and figuring how much gas they can use or groceries they can buy each week. Just standing here and listing all these things, I can understand how these students could feel overwhelmed and need some extra support.

That’s why I’m presenting this bill to the Committee. LD 447 would provide the \$5 million in ongoing funding to support student learning and completion at Maine’s Community Colleges. More specifically, this initiative would provide funding to support learning and completion for students whose education was disrupted by the pandemic and resulted in gaps in learning or learning loss.

For the \$5 million, the Maine Community College System has a detailed, specific funding plan:

- \$2.1 million would fund 20 additional navigator positions across the system focused on student success, career services, and retention.
- \$1 million would expand tutor positions and peer mentor support at all community colleges, specifically in the subjects of math and English.
- \$280,000 would add four positions in the learning commons to assist with research and library needs.
- \$520,000 would provide six and a half disability coordinator positions to assist students who have learning disabilities. It would also support community advocacy resource centers on multiple campuses to help students identify needs to be successful and connect them to both internal and external resources.
- \$600,000 would finance better student technology and course materials, renovate study and collaboration spaces, expand on-campus housing support, and provide professional development for staff focused on how to identify students who are struggling and determine barriers to success.

Although the mask mandates and the shutdowns are over, students who went to school during the pandemic are still recovering from the very real disruptions to and interruptions in their learning, whether it was elementary school or community college.

Maine lawmakers know what this was like: During the height of the pandemic, we conducted all our committee work over Zoom. It was hard sitting in front of a computer screen for hours and hours. It was hard not seeing our colleagues and friends in person. It was hard setting up home work stations where we could tune into hearings and meetings without any distractions or technological glitches. For these students, it was hard – and it continues to be hard. On top of that, their learning is vitally important for developing Maine’s workforce. These financial investments in MCCS, and the students who enroll in one of its colleges, will literally help determine Maine’s future, whether it’s dimmer or brighter. Let’s give these students – these future nurses, teachers, and workers – the extra support that they need and deserve.

I thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.



Mattie Daughtry

Assistant Senate Majority Leader, Senate District 23

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