

I would like to highlight programs similar to LD 512 that were implemented in Wisconsin and recently expanded to support low-income students attendance at the University of Wisconsin Madison. In 2018, the state legislature instituted [Bucky's Tuition Promise](#) for all Wisconsin households with an adjusted gross income of \$65,000 or less. Under this program, incoming freshmen received 8 consecutive semesters of free tuition and segregated fees and transfer students received 2 years. This program was wildly successful and the impact on the lives of ~ 3,500 Wisconsin students. Student highlights can be found [here](#). Recently, the Wisconsin State legislature expanded the program to create [Bucky's Pell Pathway program](#). This program is for Pell Grant eligible Wisconsin residents and provides not only support via grants, scholarships, and work-study for incoming and transfer students but also provides opportunity for tailored advising and additional opportunities to seek out the full college experience including industrial CO-OP experiences and study abroad for holistic educational experiences.

Maine critically needs programs that are long-term. LD 512 is a short-term solution that is only beneficial to students graduating high school during a short window. Furthermore, we can do better and be sure that we offer all eligible Maine students the critical mentoring support as they pursue their college degrees. Minimizing the financial burden is helpful, but it is only a small fraction of the entire holistic, college experience. I am already part of a NSF funded S-STEM project here at UMaine ([Building Bridges to Engineering Students \(BBEST\)](#)), that will provide the nurturing environment to support the professional training and development of the next generation of engineers. I look forward to seeing the impact of programming targeting affordability of higher education for Mainers and its economic benefits.