

Shelton Waldrep
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LD 512

I write in support of LD 512. Community Colleges in Maine and across the country were suffering from enrollment losses and the Governor and Legislature stepped up to help the Community College System enrollment with free tuition for their students. While this effort was and is noble, it has had a negative impact on the enrollment at the State's four-year public institutions. The University of Maine System cannot absorb the financial shock of losing so many students coming out of Maine's high schools. LD 512 would help to address this issue as well as continue the good work begun with the Community College system of making higher education attainable for more Maine students. The University of Southern Maine, and its sibling universities, educate many first-generation students and students who come to the University of Maine System at great sacrifice. Textbooks, transportation, food can seem like luxuries to many of our students, who struggle daily to get by. Making education available to as many Maine students as possible would be a great legacy and would help immensely with the daunting structural and demographic challenges facing the University of Maine System. Shelton Waldrep, Distinguished Professor of English and Chair of the Faculty Senate, University of Southern Maine.