Testimony in Support of LD 460, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Improve Student Success and Workforce Readiness Within the University of Maine System by Aidan McGlone, of Limington, University of Maine Mechanical Engineering Student - April 24, 2023

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations & Financial Affairs: My name is Aidan McGlone, and I am from Limington. I graduated from Bonny Eagle High School in 2019 and will be graduating from the University of Maine in May with my bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering, but I will be staying at UMaine to complete my master's degree in mechanical engineering. I am writing this testimony in support of LD 460, *An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Improve Student Success and Workforce Readiness Within the University of Maine System*.

It was clear to me from a young age that I wanted to become an engineer. I was always playing with LEGO and robotics, and I even enjoyed math class. I toured many engineering colleges anywhere from Maine to New York, but I decided on UMaine due to the strong curriculum, the distance to my family, and the affordability. The first time I took an in-depth tour and stayed at UMaine was when I was a junior in high school, I had an amazing time and surprisingly decent food, but some buildings seemed outdated to me, even though my own high school had been built in the 1960s.

Throughout my undergraduate career in Orono, I feel I have gained enough knowledge to prepare me to excel in whatever career I choose, under the umbrella of mechanical engineering of course. I have enjoyed all of my classes and labs even when they challenged me. My only complaint about my UMaine education and experience is that my lab spaces, classrooms, and dorm rooms clearly need improvement and are simply outdated.

My class was fortunate to be the first to perform capstone in the new Ferland Engineering Education and Design Center., which opened last fall and was made possible thanks to State, private and corporate funding. For clarification, capstone is a cumulative project from our first three years of undergrad in which we are given a problem and have to go through the entire engineering process, including a building phase. The new building made this process much more enjoyable and valuable to my learning, fostering greater collaboration with my peers and the modern technology and space to innovate. Between the team meeting rooms, which have TVs and whiteboards, and the new design suite, working with my team and manufacturing our project was so much easier. Imagining building our design in the previous capstone design area, I would have felt claustrophobic with the large number of people packed into the tiny, old building. Never once did I feel that way in Ferland. Also, I feel having access to 3D-printers, dedicated metal and wood shops, and even other specialized labs in the new building, helps maintain an orderly, but more importantly, safe working environment for the students.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my views on UMaine and the impact of the new Ferland EEDC on me and other engineering students, which showed me how State funding can directly benefit the quality of education, research, and opportunity at Maine's public universities for current and future generations. Just this one building has improved the quality of three engineering degree programs, and I am looking forward to seeing how UMaine and other universities in the system improve over the coming years with your support for the additional investment proposed by LD 460.