

Wednesday, April 26, 2023

Testimony of Julia Munsey for The Maine State Chamber of Commerce In Support of
L.D. 460 An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Improve Student Success and
Workforce Readiness Within the University of Maine System

Chairs Rotundo and Sachs, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations & Financial Affairs, my name is Julia Munsey. I am President and CEO of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, a statewide business association made up of both large and small businesses. I am pleased to provide you with testimony in support of L.D. 460.

Maine's business community is the largest consumer of higher education. Our economic future relies on a steady pipeline of educated and skilled individuals graduating from our university system. Our latest *Making Maine Work* report, created in partnership with Educate Maine and Maine Development Foundation, highlighted workforce needs at all levels and investment in research and development. There is a long-standing understanding of the relationship between economic growth and higher education. Our university system generates the human talent necessary for industry to evolve, become more efficient, and raise living standards. Our university system plays a key role in developing and attracting talent as well as diversifying Maine's product offerings. The system is a major catalyst for research and development and helps industry spur innovation that could not be accomplished otherwise.

There are countless examples of how the university system uses funds to fill industry needs and drive economic growth. A few highlights include the Ferland Engineering Education & Design Center that will allow the university to double its output of engineers and computing professionals. The recent opening of their nursing simulation lab will give Maine's largest nursing education program the ability to deliver hands-on workforce training to address our severe nursing shortage. Future projects include the R1 UMaine for the Green Engineering & Materials Factory of the Future. The UMaine system is a leader in innovation and provides students with the education necessary for personal success and to bring value to Maine's employers.

This bond would help the university system continue its path as an attractor of talent. The facilities and residence halls of any university system are a driving factor in recruitment. The UMaine system must remain competitive. As the most northern system in New England, the

UMaine system must be able to update facilities and residence halls in a manner that not only retains Maine high school graduates but pulls high school graduates to Maine. Maine has plenty of job openings and many college graduates start careers close to their university of choice. There is a significant opportunity here to attract students and eventual workers to our state.

As a proud UMaine alum, Class of '02, someone with a lifelong connection to the University of Maine System, and current board chair of the UMaine Alumni Association, I cannot say enough about what the University of Maine has meant to me both professionally and personally. Investing in UMS is one of the best investments Maine can make for its future. It is my pleasure to offer testimony in support of L.D. 460 to continue to strengthen the UMaine System, and to make Maine an even greater place to live, work, learn, and do business.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our testimony.

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