



AGC MAINE

THE CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

Testimony of Matthew Marks 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”

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

April 26, 2023

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee Appropriations and Financial Affairs my name is Matthew Marks, I am a Principal at Cornerstone Government Affairs, and here today to speak on behalf of my client The Associated General Contractors of Maine. AGC Maine is a statewide commercial construction trade association and a Chapter of AGC America.

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to participate in a task force that brought together Maine’s post-secondary public institutions to examine the process of integrating an evaluation tool used by the UMaine System to evaluate their facility needs. It was clear during the process the University has completed the necessary ongoing due diligence to assess its facilities but also planning to tackle the backlog through a strategic and calculated process.

Currently, the system has a \$1.3 billion backlog in infrastructure improvements. As you know, they have utilized their ability to fundraise, leverage public-private partnerships, and budget accordingly to continue addressing these needs. I attended a national conference pre-pandemic in Dallas, Texas on our country’s infrastructure and one of the breakout sessions included the ongoing challenges in public higher education institutions across our nation. In that session, I learned that 2/3rds of students and parents are influenced by the facility conditions in their decision-making process. As a parent, my daughter is currently making her college visits, and as you might suspect it’s usually the first impression she shares.

From a construction perspective, the University has been a stellar partner in the industry. Like Maine DOT, they prepare the often-said “shovel-ready projects” that utilize a competitive bid process. In this bond, the same considerations of asset-based decisions making are applied. Repairing structures to keep them in good standing, ensuring life safety standards, ADA compliance, and investing in the future by dedicating the necessary funds towards the Green Engineering and Materials Factory of the Future that is developing durable, innovative construction technology and materials.

AGC Maine encourages the Committee to move ahead with funding the future workforce and continued effort to invest strategically in our higher education system. The fiscal prudence of the investment will assist in our statewide efforts to retain students here in Maine. Thank you for considering my comments, and I am happy to answer any questions.