

**Testimony from Nicholas Hamel  
Monmouth  
Vice President & Dean of Students at Central Maine Community College**

**In Support of L.D. 210  
An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds  
for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary  
to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30,  
2026 and June 30, 2027 (A-132 through A-134 and language EEEE)**

**Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs  
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**

**February 7, 2025**

Senator Rotundo, Senator Rafferty, Representative Gattine, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Nicholas Hamel. My hometown is Monmouth and I am the Vice President and Dean of Students at Central Maine Community College (CMCC) in Auburn. I am here to testify in support of the portion of LD210 that funds the Maine Free College Program and general operating costs at the Maine Community College System.

I was born and raised in Maine. I am the product of a local Maine high school. I earned my first degree from a Maine Community College and transferred to the University of Maine System where I earned my second degree. My high school sweetheart and I are married and are raising our two children in our hometown. Maine is my home. I love Maine and couldn't imagine being anywhere else.

In my 25 years at CMCC I have seen a lot of changes, a lot of growth and a lot of things come and go. Overall, I am proud of the institution I work for watching it mature into one of the finest higher education opportunities Maine has to offer. Since the beginning of the Maine Free College Program CMCC has certainly seen an increase in students, college wide, throughout all our programs. I'm sure you have seen that data and the different perspectives from testimonies today that explain how valuable and important an investment this is for Maine.

The perspective I want to highlight, which has been glaringly obvious to me over the last few years, is the effect of Maine Free College on our hands-on and skilled trade and career programs. Prior to Maine Free College these programs had ample capacity. Enrollment in them seemed to be steady or slightly declining as interest from our traditional student population was not quite what it used to be.

Today, if you walk into any of our classrooms and labs; HVAC & Plumbing, Automotive, Electromechanical, Building Construction, Nursing, Criminal Justice, just to name a few, they are all full, all buzzing like beehives. Instructors in these programs are asking us for more space and resources, which we are doing our best to provide. Quite simply, these programs are graduating more students with even more on the horizon. Even here and now, our students are affecting the local economy. Many

of these programs require field experiences. So, our students are working in Maine, at automobile dealerships, for example, while enrolled in their program, further supporting Maine's workforce needs even prior to graduation.

Now, as a lifelong Mainer and a homeowner for the last two decades, I am more than aware how hard it is to find a plumber, an electrician or even a carpenter to work on my house. Just this week my mechanic told me he is scheduling into April and won't be able to work on my truck until then. The investment you have made through the Maine Free College Program is going to pay off. We will have more skilled workers. They are graduating as we speak. We need to continue this investment. The Maine Free College Scholarship is good for Maine.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicholas S. Hamel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "N".

Nicholas Hamel

Vice President & Dean of Students  
Central Maine Community College