

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Beuma Maria Vunda, and I'm a student at Southern Maine Community College from South Portland, Maine. 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.

First and foremost, I want to express my deep gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to this legislative hearing on the Free College Scholarship program. Access to higher education is one of the most significant factors in a student's success, yet for many of us, the financial burden of college tuition can feel insurmountable.

During my senior year of high school, I was deeply concerned about how I would afford college. I had dreams and ambitions, but financial limitations made them seem out of reach. Without financial assistance, I knew my options would be extremely limited. I considered entering the workforce immediately, taking on jobs that required only brief training—jobs that might provide stability but would not allow me to fulfill my true aspirations. However, my passion has always been to become a nurse, a profession that requires formal education and extensive training.

The thought of not being able to pursue my career goals was overwhelming. Like many students, I feared that without financial aid, my dreams would remain just that—dreams. This concern is even more pressing for students facing additional barriers, such as asylum seekers, who often find it even more difficult to secure funding for higher education.

When I learned about the Free College Scholarship at Southern Maine Community College, my perspective changed entirely. It was as if a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. Suddenly, the future I once saw as impossible became attainable. Being accepted into the Free College program not only allowed me to continue my education but also restored my hope for a better future.

The Free College Scholarship is not just financial aid—it is a life-changing opportunity. It enables students like me to pursue careers that contribute meaningfully to our communities. It empowers those who might otherwise be left behind due to financial hardship. Investing in this program means investing in the future of Maine—ensuring that students have the resources they need to succeed, contribute to the workforce, and achieve their full potential.

I strongly urge you to continue supporting and expanding the Maine Free College Program so that more students can benefit as I have. The Free College Scholarship is not just beneficial; it is essential for students striving to build a better future for themselves and our society as a whole.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Beulah  
Southern Maine Community College Student