

Tori Penney
South Portland
LD 210

Greetings,

My name is Tori Penney, and I am a graduate of the University of Maine System and a proud born Mainer from Leeds, Maine. I currently live in South Portland, ME. I am writing in support of LD 210 that funds the Maine Free College Program and general operating costs at the Maine Community College System.

I work at Southern Maine Community College, and I have seen the power of the Free College program first hand. Thanks to this program, I have gotten to work with students who otherwise would not have the opportunity to attend college and experience the personal, professional, and skill growth that comes from higher education.

Many jobs in Maine require a college degree, even many entry level positions. Employers see the benefit of a worker with higher education. Community colleges in our state are preparing the next generation Mainers -- our EMTs, firefighters, tradespeople, teachers, medical staff, small business owners, social workers, and more. Many of these fields are short staffed and need more trained employees.

My position requires a master's degree -- and I now have \$50,000 worth of student loans that I will be paying off for the majority of my life. I do not wish that on anyone -- especially young Mainers looking to improve their station and contribute to my beautiful state. I am happy and proud that my tax dollars are paying for a brighter future for them, for me, and for my community.

I encourage you to pass this bill and to support the Community College system in the great work it is doing. We will be setting ourselves up for the future by funding the MCCS and the education of our citizens. Thank you for your time and consideration,
Tori Penney