

Written Testimony of Mary Haibon

In Opposition to

**Part CCCC of
LD 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**

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

February 7, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Mary Haibon, and the parent of Joanne Haibon, a student in the Integrated Studies Program at Saint Joseph's College in Standish, Maine. I testify today in strong opposition to Part CCCC of LD 210 (the Biennial Budget).

Part CCCC limits the use of the Maine State Grant Program to students attending Maine institutions of public higher education, thereby excluding the long time use of the Maine State Grant by Maine students wanting to attend one of Maine's independent colleges or universities.

- My name is Mary Haibon and I live in Windham, Maine. My daughter, Joanne is a student in the Integrated Studies Program at Saint Joseph's College
- Joanne is an incredibly bright person who has an insatiable love for learning. She learns at a different pace than most of her peers and occasionally needs some extra time, clarification on work, or a gentle reminder to focus. Joanne can sometimes get distracted by what's happening around her, but her passion for learning always shines through.
- During her time in grades K-12, it wasn't always easy to get her the support she needed to thrive and feel comfortable in the classroom. When Joanne was in high school, we didn't think college was an option for her. We often had to advocate for her to receive basic support in public school, where she was supposed to be guaranteed a free and appropriate education. Given those challenges, we figured college was out of the question.
- I thought Saint Joseph's College would be perfect for Joanne because of the Integrated Studies Program, the first of its kind at a private college in Maine.

- The Integrated Studies Program provides students with special needs a peer partner, extra support from the College's Academic Center for Excellence office and an opportunity to be a part of the classroom experience to the best of that student's ability.
- I felt that Saint Joseph's College offered a unique experience for Joanne in a safe environment.
- This program and college will allow Joanne to be independent, learn to work with others, and learn valuable communication skills as well as getting a valuable education.
- We feel that Saint Joseph's College has answered not only our prayers but also Joanne's, enabling her to continue her education. We are incredibly grateful and excited to see what Joanne will achieve with all the amazing skills she has learned. We can't wait to watch her put her knowledge to use in our beautiful state of Maine.
- Because of the Saint Joseph's College Integrated Studies Program, my daughter will be able to become a contributing member of the Maine workforce.
- All of this is made possible because our family has been able to utilize the Maine State Grant to help us afford to have Joanne enrolled at Saint Joseph's College.

Thank you for your consideration, and I strongly urge you to vote to remove Part CCCC from the Biennial Budget.