

Testimony of Beth White
Maine Service Employees Association, SEIU Local 1989
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
and the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,
10am Friday day, February 7, 2025, State House Room 228 and Electronically

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, (Emergency) (Governor's Bill),
Sponsored by Representative Drew Gattine

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I'm Beth White, director of politics and legislation for the Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the Service Employees International Union. We are a labor union representing over 13,000 Maine workers, including workers at the Maine Community College System and Maine Maritime Academy.

We're encouraged by the proposed 4% increase in funding for Maine's public universities, including MCCA and MMA. These public investments are necessary, and we hope they will be used at least in part to recruit and retain staff.

At the Maine Community College System, our union proudly represents the adjunct faculty, support services workers and supervisory services workers at all seven campuses. We are extremely proud of their work. Whenever the Community College system adapts to meet the needs of our great state, it is our members who step up to meet those changes. The Community College System is vital to workforce development and training. It meets the needs of recent high school grads, those displaced from layoffs, those seeking career changes and so much more. That's why we're encouraged by the proposed continuation of the Free Community College program. That said, it's important to note that on average, adjuncts teach around 55% of courses on the MCCA campuses, and it's upwards of 70% or more in some MCCA departments. As such, we encourage continued investments in adjuncts and the creation of more full-time faculty positions at MCCA as a way to reduce the college system's reliance on adjuncts. Creating more full-time faculty positions would cultivate a career path for adjuncts, many of whom would prefer to be full-time faculty, and thus strengthen recruitment and retention throughout the college system.

At Maine Maritime Academy, we're proud to represent the faculty, staff, support, professional and supervisory workers. They are an integral part of training the next generation of Maine mariners. MMA also is a STEM college offering degrees in engineering, oceanography and logistics, among others. As Maine's special-purpose college and one of only six state maritime academies in the nation, it is critical we all share in ensuring MMA's success, so we appreciate the investments in MMA in the proposed state budget. That being said, wages for staff at MMA have not kept up with the cost of living over the last few years, which has caused recruitment and retention challenges. Maine Maritime Academy is an incredible asset for our state, due in no small part to the workers who dedicate their time and energy to making sure students can thrive and succeed. Ensuring that MMA workers are compensated fairly for their important work will not only help with recruitment & retention of staff but will also mean students

continue receiving the high-quality education that MMA is known for. Thank you and I would be glad to answer any questions.