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TO: Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
FROM: Becky Smith, Director of Government and Community Relations
RE: Testimony in support of LD 1558 *Resolve, Establishing the Commission to Update Maine's Public Policy on Higher Education*
DATE: April 24, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, My name is Becky Smith, and I am here today to testify in please support of LD 1558, *Resolve, Establishing the Commission to Update Maine's Public Policy on Higher Education* on behalf of the Maine Community College System with what I hope is a friendly amendment.

We would recommend adding a member to the proposed commission representing the Maine Community College System Board of Trustees to add some additional expertise to the commission in order to best inform the commission's outcomes. Our board members set policies for the system and are well positioned to bring considerable depth and breadth of knowledge and expertise to the commission in its work. For example, the board is actively engaged in ongoing review of programs, finances, student-related issues and both short- and long-term planning for the colleges. This commission is likely to take up a very wide range of issues, and a trustee representative will be an important voice in those discussions.

We also respectfully request that the Resolve allow the MCCS Board of Trustees to choose from its ranks to be a member of the proposed commission.

We are first and foremost an educational institution. As such we are deeply invested in Maine's public policies on higher education, their rigorous review, and the ongoing analysis of where new policies are needed to support the MCCS mission – in statute - of developing “an educated, skilled and adaptable labor force that is responsive to the changing needs of the Maine economy.”

That mission and the need to be “responsive to the changing needs” of the Maine economy supports the need to have a trustee represented on the proposed commission.

We welcome the opportunity to work with our colleagues at other public higher education institutions and the legislature to review laws and rules addressing the state's public policy on higher education and make recommendations for potential legislative changes.

We respectfully recommend that you support this Resolve and support adding a member to the commission to represent the Maine Community College System Board of Trustees.