

EDUCATE MAINE



Testimony by Jason Judd, Ed.D., Executive Director, Educate Maine

To The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs on
Wednesday, January 21, 2026, 10:00am

In Support of

**LD 2147: An Act to Provide Funding to Improve the College and Career Readiness of Certain Students in
Androscoggin and Oxford Counties**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

I am writing to express my support for LD 2147: An Act to Provide Funding to Improve the College and Career Readiness of Certain Students in Androscoggin and Oxford Counties. Educate Maine is a business-led education organization focused on increasing education attainment. Our mission is to ensure that Maine people are prepared to succeed in education and careers, and that all Maine people reach their highest educational potential.

My understanding is that this bill will support high school students from six schools in Androscoggin and Oxford Counties with academic support and college and career preparation services. The University of Maine at Farmington's River Valley Upward Bound program served these students in the past until a federal grant was recently cancelled. When I was a high school student attending school in Somerset County, I was able to attend UMF's Upward Bound program where I received academic support and college and career preparation services. This program was instrumental in helping me pursue postsecondary education as a low-income and first-generation college student. Thanks to the support of UMF's program, I've been able to pursue a variety of postsecondary degrees including two degrees from campuses of the University of Maine System and one from Northeastern University. Students in Androscoggin and Oxford Counties should have these same opportunities.

First-generation students and students from low-income families do not attend postsecondary education at the same rates as their peers. Educate Maine publishes the Education Indicators Report for Maine which includes a snapshot of important data about Maine's education system. Metrics include Maine's high school graduation data, post-secondary enrollment data, post-secondary persistence data, and post-secondary graduation data. According to Maine's most recent data, 57% of Maine high school graduates enroll in postsecondary education. Higher income students enroll in college at a much higher rate than their economically disadvantaged peers (the gap is 20 points). It is also important to note that only 58% of Maine college students graduate within 6 years of enrollment. The completion rates of college students are 28 points more for higher income students versus their economically disadvantaged peers. This data highlights the need for additional support for students from low-income families to help increase enrollment and graduation rates for Maine students.

There are a variety of best practices happening in communities across Maine to help students improve academically and prepare them for success in postsecondary education. It is important that we continue to invest in programs that support low-income and first-generation students. The various Upward Bound programs and other TRIO programs available at Maine's higher education institutions are wonderful examples of these best practices happening across Maine. In addition, Maine's support of early college is an essential program to help

low-income students and first-generation students enroll and persist in postsecondary education. JMG programs across Maine also support students to successfully enter postsecondary education and the workforce. These are just a few examples of programs that we should support to help improve postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion for Maine students.

I encourage members to support this bill and continue to prioritize best practices that can help all learners be prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce.