

I strongly support free college. As an advisor at Central Maine Community College, I have seen firsthand how free tuition has transformed the lives of students who otherwise would not have had the financial ability to attend college. Many students have shared that they had no plans to pursue higher education, but when tuition became free, they decided to enroll. They often express gratitude that this opportunity gave them the motivation and incentive to pursue an education they had never considered possible.

Free college also benefits the state of Maine by helping address workforce shortages, increasing employment rates, and equipping individuals with valuable skills in healthcare, the trades, and technology. These are critical fields where Maine needs trained professionals.

A significant portion of our population is low-income and lives in rural communities. Our online programs make it possible for students in remote areas to earn a degree without traveling to campus, removing both financial and geographic barriers.

Additionally, many of our students work full-time or part-time while balancing family responsibilities and monthly expenses. For them, college tuition can feel out of reach. Free college provides an opportunity to better themselves, begin a career without debt, pursue higher-paying positions, or qualify for jobs that require at least an associate degree. In today's workforce, many positions require postsecondary education, and without free college, these opportunities would remain inaccessible to much of our population.

I strongly support free college. Being an advisor at Central Maine Community College, I have seen firsthand how it has changed and shaped students' lives that wouldn't normally have the opportunity to pay for and go to college. Many students have told me they didn't have plans to go to college but since it was free they decided to go. They are also very happy that the free college gave them an incentive to get an education they were not looking for.

This allows the state of Maine to fill workforce shortages, raise employment rates, and help employees gain skills in healthcare, trades and technology.

Many of our population are low income and live in rural communities. Our many online programs allow students in rural communities to get a degree without even coming to campus.

Most of our student population are working at least full-time some part-time and can't afford college with family obligations and monthly bills. This gives students an opportunity to go to college to better themselves, start a career without debt, create a path for a higher paying job, or to be able to get a job that requires a degree. Many jobs nowadays you must have at least an associate's degree which limits many of our population without free college.

Christine Lee
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