

Jason Early

Regarding the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee

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Hello, my name is Jason Early and I am a YCCC student in my fourth semester. I am submitting written testimony on how Maine Free College has greatly benefited my life, and how making the program permanent is a worthwhile endeavor.

As a high-school graduate in 2024, I was able to take part in the Maine Free College program. I was accepted at YCCC and began to make my way through their Architectural & Engineering Design program. For me, this opportunity served as a way to acclimate to college life, without the shock that might come with a large campus. The staff and faculty have been nothing short of amazing, and I greatly admire many of them. While I had already planned on going into the engineering field, a field in-demand here in Maine, this also let me spread my wings to look into architecture as well. And, as I have heard from many classmates, this program is incredibly beneficial to fulfill core class requirements for four-year colleges, and find what they might be interested in.

I wanted to share my story as a consistent President's List-achieving student, because I believe I have insight into what this program has done for people. It lowered the barrier for education substantially and gave unthought-of opportunities to many, improving lives. I am headed to the University of Southern Maine in the fall, and I only feel prepared to do so, and subsequently intern at a local Maine firm, because of the rock-solid foundation that YCCC and

the Maine Free College program provided. I also have family that could take advantage of this program in the future to improve their educational experience and life.

Making this program permanent would be to the advantage of the population of Maine, and I hope the Committee can see from the point of view of a Maine Free College student how incredible it can be for just one person. Combine that with all the other people who are able to better their lives through the program, and it becomes clear how large of an impact this can have on Maine.

I would like to thank the Committee and all its members. Your consideration of this testimony, and the ideas expressed within, are greatly appreciated.