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As the Dean of Academic Affairs at Central Maine Community College, I have the privilege of working closely with faculty and students on a daily basis. Many of these students are first-generation college students or individuals who once believed that higher education was financially out of their reach. I have seen firsthand how Free College in Maine has opened doors that otherwise would have remained closed. Students who once doubted whether college was financially possible are enrolling and staying enrolled. With tuition covered, they are more present in class, more engaged with faculty, and more confident in their ability to complete a credential. Through my work with academic programs and faculty, I have a front-row seat to how this positively affects our students' academic success. We now spend more time focusing on students' degree progress, transfer options, and career goals. Students are persisting at higher rates and finishing with less financial pressure. With the visible impact of free college on educational access, Mainers are stepping into higher education with confidence and being set up for long-term success.

Thank you
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