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Good morning,

My name is Eric Meader, and I serve as the Associate Dean of Enrollment Management at Central Maine Community College in Auburn. I am writing in support of Maine Free College based specifically on what we are seeing at CMCC.

At Central Maine Community College, Maine Free College has had a very real and immediate impact on access. We work daily with first generation students, recent high school graduates, working adults, and students returning after time away from education. For many of them, cost is the single biggest barrier. When tuition support is available, the conversation quickly shifts from whether college is possible to how they can successfully enroll and complete a program.

From an enrollment standpoint, we have seen increased interest and stronger follow through from students who qualify for Maine Free College. Students who may have hesitated in the past are applying, registering, and actually starting classes. That is a meaningful shift. It allows us to connect students to advising, orientation, and academic planning much earlier, which supports long term success.

We are also seeing the student success side of this. When students are not as financially stressed, they are more engaged and better able to focus on coursework. They are more likely to stay enrolled, complete their classes, and continue semester to semester. In our day to day work in Advising the reduction in financial pressure clearly supports persistence.

At CMCC, our programs are closely tied to regional workforce needs, including healthcare, skilled trades, business, and technical fields. Maine Free College helps students enter these programs sooner and with fewer barriers, which directly supports local workforce development in the Lewiston Auburn region and surrounding communities.

Most importantly, this initiative aligns with our mission to be accessible and student centered. Maine Free College allows us to serve students who may have otherwise assumed college was out of reach. We regularly hear from students that this opportunity is the reason they chose to enroll at CMCC in the first place.

From our perspective on campus, Maine Free College is making a measurable difference in who enrolls, how students persist, and how confidently they move toward completion. It is a practical and impactful investment in CMCC students and the communities we serve.

Thank you for your time and for your continued support of initiatives that expand access to higher education for Maine students.