

Good evening,

I am writing to support the continuation of the Maine Free Community College Scholarship in the State of Maine. I have been teaching at Central Maine Community College (CMCC) as a full-time faculty member in the Mathematics and Physical Science Department for the past six years. During this time, I have taught over two thousand students that had the opportunity to attend CMCC and not acquire college debt. This is just a small proportion of students who took advantage of the Maine Free Community College Scholarship. I have included this information as I want to provide background for my testimony.

I heard from numerous students who said they did not think college was in their future as they had no idea how they were going to pay for it. This program eliminated financial barriers to higher education, enabling students to graduate with little to no debt and begin their careers on solid financial footing. You may have heard statements like; students do not try in their classes or programs as they are not paying for their college. I have seen firsthand this not to be the case.

As Department Chair of the Electromechanical Technology Program at CMCC, I have noticed an increase over the last five years in non-traditional students in the trades. While the enrollment increase cannot be attributed solely to the free community college scholarship, the removal of tuition costs has been a significant factor in students choosing to pursue trades as a career.

Community Colleges provide a system for students to begin careers in the trades, which is beneficial to Maine communities. The scholarship provides opportunities for those at the high school technical centers to continue to pursue their trade and meet the education requirements for Maine License requirements. The state needs more trade workers, and this scholarship is a way for the state to provide a clear pathway to reach this goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

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CMCC