

**Testimony Neither For Nor Against Portions of LD 2212, An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027**

Good morning, Senators Rotundo and Rafferty, Representatives Gattine and Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is James Myall; I'm a policy analyst at the Maine Center for Economic Policy and I'm testifying neither for nor against certain Education provisions in the Governor's supplemental budget proposal.

MECEP is supportive of the Governor's proposal to continue meeting the statutory obligation to fund 55% of the cost of K-12 public education. Doing so is not only an important investment in the education of Maine children and our future economy, but helps to keep down local property taxes which would otherwise have to rise in many communities to meet the cost of essential programs and services.

MECEP also supports the Governor's proposal to make Maine's free community college program permanent. Giving Mainers an option to pursue debt-free higher education will lead to higher earnings for those Mainers and a more dynamic economy from which we will all benefit. MECEP continues to believe that the program could be improved in two ways:

- Allowing Mainers to pursue two years of free higher education in either the community college or university systems, opening up a wider array of courses to students and ensuring that the program does not cannibalize enrollment in the University system
- Opening the program to all Mainers, rather than just recent high school graduates. There are around 100,000 Mainers of prime working age (25-54) who have some college credit but did not finish their degree.<sup>1</sup> A little investment in these Mainers would pay off greatly for our economy.

Finally MECEP values the Governor's proposal in part SSS to raise the minimum teacher salary for K-12 public school teachers. This will be particularly helpful in the most rural parts of the state, where public school teachers make up a larger share of the workforce,

and where existing salaries are particularly low. While this provision has no cost to the state in the current biennium, it will require additional funding in future years.

To sustainably meet the need for continued investment in education, MECEP urges you to increase taxes on wealthy Mainers and corporations who are not burdened with college debt or struggling to make ends meet while educating Maine kids. The legislature has already advanced several bills to do this (LDs 229, 1089, 1879), and we would urge you to include any one of those in the supplemental budget.

Thank you for your time; I'm happy to answer any questions.

## Notes

---

<sup>i</sup> US Census Bureau, American Community Survey data, 2024 via the Integrated Public Use Microdata System (IPUMS).