



To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Central Aroostook Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to express our strong support for the continued funding and approval of the Maine Free College program as included in the Governor's supplemental budget.

Northern Maine Community College (NMCC) plays a vital role in developing the skilled workforce that sustains and grows Aroostook County's economy. This year, more than half of NMCC students are recipients of Maine Free College and rely on the program to access higher education. The impact of this investment is significant and measurable — the vast majority of these students remain in our region, becoming residents, employees, entrepreneurs, and community leaders.

For rural communities like ours, Maine Free College is not simply an education initiative; it is an economic development strategy. Local employers across healthcare, manufacturing, trades, education, hospitality, and public service depend on NMCC graduates to fill critical workforce needs. Without accessible and affordable pathways to education, many of these students would not have the opportunity to enroll, complete their credentials, or remain in Aroostook County.

The proposed updates to the program — prioritizing Maine students, establishing a 150% completion timeframe, and transitioning to a last-dollar model — provide structure and sustainability while maintaining access for those who need it most. These refinements strengthen the program's focus while preserving its core mission: keeping Maine students in Maine and preparing them for Maine careers.

The Central Aroostook Chamber of Commerce strongly supports the approval and continued funding of Maine Free College. Investing in our students is an investment in our workforce, our businesses, and the long-term vitality of our region.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to Maine's future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "LaNiece Sirois". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LaNiece Sirois, Executive Director  
Central Aroostook Chamber of Commerce