

**Testimony of Barbara Kerr Hamilton (University of Maine Class of 1982),
Senior Director of Corporate Technology, Packaging Corporation of America,
In Support of Funding for the University of Maine System as Proposed in LD 258
February 13, 2023**

Senator Rafferty, Senator Rotundo, Representative Brennan, Representative Sachs, and the esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Barbara Kerr Hamilton, and I am a Sr. Director of Corporate Technology for Packaging Corporation of America and a 1982 graduate of the University of Maine. I am here today to speak in strong support of the investment proposed in Gov. Mills' biennial budget (LD 258) for our public universities and Maine talent development and innovation for the future.

PCA is the 3rd largest producer of containerboard and corrugated products in the United States. We look to UMaine for both technical talent and primary research. Many members of our senior leadership team, of which I am a part, graduated from the University of Maine. PCA has donated generously to UMaine – over \$2M in the past few years alone – to both the Ferland Engineering Education and Design Center and the UMaine Pulp and Paper Foundation.

The executive management of PCA is impressed with the University of Maine because there is an emphasis on experiential learning. Maine students can participate in research, development, and scaling of technology. They can work as interns at industrial facilities between semesters. PCA needs that kind of talent, people who are ready to innovate, to do impossible things in what many outsiders see as an “old” industry.

The collaboration between the University of Maine and the Pulp and Paper Industry is more than a partnership – it is a community. And I have been a very passionate member of that community for over 40 years.

My late parents, John and Joan Kerr of Oakland, were both graduates of William's High School. My dad went on to obtain an associate degree in automotive technology from what was then Southern Maine Vocational Technical Institute. My mom, despite being the 1956 class valedictorian, did not continue past a high school diploma. There were no resources to support her secondary education, neither internally nor externally.

When I was a senior at Messalonskee High School, I was offered a full tuition scholarship to study engineering at the University of Maine. I was the first person in my family – but by no means the last – to graduate with a four-year degree. I have enjoyed an amazing career that has included working for paper producers, a Maine based engineering company, and three multi-national manufacturers. I appear here before you today as a testament to the impact of this university and that amazing community.

The governor's proposed funding is an opportunity to keep this story going. The rural areas of this state have amazing individuals with incredible experiences – and I want those folks, high school students and non-traditional students alike, to know that the University of Maine system has a pathway for them to grow, to thrive, and to contribute. **No mind should be left behind in the state of Maine.** We need to keep tuition affordable and primary research accessible to tap into this incredible pool of talent.

If you are looking for an investment in the Maine economy that will pay dividends for years to come, this is it.



Barbara Kerr Hamilton is a senior director of process technology at Packaging Corporation of America (PCA), a corrugated packaging company that is headquartered in Illinois and employs more than 15,000 people. Barbara lives in Maine and travels to PCA mills to support automation and process control projects. She has experience as an engineer, manager, and leader in the industrial automation and energy space. In her current role, she leads PCA's corporate automation and controls experts, promoting new technologies and optimization. Barbara retains deep ties to the University of Maine, her alma mater, and is a past chair of the UMaine Pulp and Paper Foundation Board of Directors and a current member of the UMPPF's executive committee. She also serves on the UMaine Board of Visitors.