



TO: Senator Rotundo, Senator Rafferty, Representative Gattine, Representative Murphy  
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs  
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

FROM: Brandon Norsworthy, Student at Washington County Community College

RE: Testimony in support of LD 210, An Act Making Unified 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, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027 (A-132 through A-134 and language EEEE)

DATE: February 7, 2025

---

Senator Rotundo, Senator Rafferty, Representative Gattine, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Brandon Norsworthy. I'm from Fort Fairfield, Maine, and I am a student at Washington County Community College. I am here to testify in support of the portion of LD 210 that funds the Maine Free College Program and general operating costs at the Maine Community College System.

The Maine Free College Program has changed my life in ways I never expected. Coming from a small town, I knew that higher education would open doors for me, but I also knew that the cost of attending college could be a major barrier, and I likely would have had to take a year off to work and save money before continuing my education. Thanks to this program, I have been able to pursue my education without the financial stress that often forces students to put their dreams on hold.

This opportunity has allowed me to gain certifications and training that I wouldn't have had access to otherwise. Through my studies, I have earned OSHA certifications and developed mechanical skills that are essential in today's workforce. I've learned how things work, how to troubleshoot problems, and how to apply these skills in real-world settings. This knowledge has not only expanded my career options but has also given me confidence in my ability to succeed in my chosen field. With this degree, I am now on a path to securing a higher-paying job one that aligns with my skills and ambitions. More importantly, I feel prepared to enter the workforce with the knowledge and hands-on experience necessary to contribute effectively.

This program isn't just benefiting me it's supporting students across Maine. By removing financial barriers, it allows students to pursue careers that are in demand, strengthening both our workforce and our economy. Community colleges play a critical role in training the next generation of skilled workers, and without continued funding, many students may lose access to these valuable opportunities. A reduction in funding could lead to lower enrollment numbers, fewer applicants, and a workforce that isn't fully prepared to meet industry needs.

Investing in free community college isn't just an investment in students it's an investment in Maine's future. It provides institutions with the necessary resources to improve programs, update equipment, and offer training that meets industry standards. Continued funding for this program will ensure that students like me—and those who come after me can receive the education and training they need to succeed.

I urge you to support LD 210 and continue funding the Maine Free College Program. Thank you for your time and consideration.