

Testimony of Jeannine Diddle Uzzi, Ph.D.

In Opposition to

Part CCCC 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**

**Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs**

**Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**

February 7, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, Good Morning.

My name is **Jeannine Diddle Uzzi**, and I represent **Thomas College in Waterville**. I testify today in strong opposition to Part CCCC of LD 210 (the Biennial Budget).

Part CCCC limits the use of the Maine State Grant Program to students attending Maine institutions of public higher education, thereby excluding the long time use of the Maine State Grant by Maine students wanting to attend one of Maine's independent colleges or universities.

In my four months as president of Thomas College, I have learned that Thomas has been wholly dedicated to the students, communities, and businesses of the State of Maine, in particular to the students, communities, and businesses of Central and Northern Maine. The College, although private, has behaved as if it were a state-funded institution. Thomas College has deep ties to the Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce, and we place our graduates in the businesses that support the economy of Central Maine and beyond. In addition, students taking Thomas College dual enrollment classes at high schools across the state pay nothing for those credits.

73% of Thomas College students are from Maine. 70% of Thomas College graduates remain in the state to live and work after graduation. This means that of every dollar anyone puts into Thomas College, 70 cents stays right here in Maine.

The entire expense budget of Thomas College this year is about \$27 million dollars, but our total contribution to the Maine economy was nearly \$47 million in 2023 and will be even higher this year. Of our expense budget, this year we put \$11 million institutional dollars into scholarships to reduce the cost of a degree for our students. And we raised donor funding on top of that to further offset student costs.

Thomas College is not only in the business of keeping the cost of education in check. We also do an excellent job supporting first generation Maine students to degree: all our undergraduate degrees can be completed in 3 years, and we have a 99% success rate in our guaranteed job program. If our students are no longer eligible for the Maine State Grant, those students will collectively lose \$628,000.

Thank you for your consideration. I urge you to vote to remove Part CCCC from the Biennial Budget.