

Testimony of Rylee Tellier, Student, Husson University

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,

My name is Rylee Tellier, and I am a student at Husson University seeking a degree in occupational therapy and a recipient of the Maine State Grant. I am here to 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 like myself who want to attend one of Maine's independent colleges or universities.

First, I'd like to thank the legislature for allowing me to speak, along with everyone here today. I am a first-generation college student. Unlike many in my situation, I have been fortunate to receive opportunities that other students may not have, and I am deeply grateful for all of my peers, mentors, and parents who have unconditionally supported me throughout my higher education journey. Like many of my classmates, I rely on the Maine State Grant to help me continue my education. Without them, I would not be here today, sharing just how vital these grants are, not only for me but for the entire Husson community.

Being the first in my family to attend college, navigating this journey was not easy. Coming from a low-income household, I knew I would need to pay for college on my own. Even with financial aid, I worked two jobs during my first semester—spending my days in class, working at the financial aid office, and hosting at Unos during the night just to afford my bills and stay enrolled.

I chose Husson because it offered me not only a top-tier Occupational Therapy program but also a supportive community that truly wants its students to succeed, which I have seen firsthand. The faculty, resources, and hands-on learning opportunities here have made every long shift and late night worth it, reinforcing my commitment to not only my education but my future in Maine.

Maine State Grants don't just impact me; they impact the future of healthcare in our state. Husson is one of the best schools for Occupational Therapy in Maine, and without financial support, many students like me wouldn't have the opportunity to pursue this career. OT is about helping people regain their independence, and Maine desperately needs more professionals in this field. Students should have the choice to stay in their home state for an education without being forced elsewhere due to their financial situation to find the education they want.

I plan to stay in Maine, using my degree to give back to the community that raised me. But without Maine State Grants, fewer students will have this choice. We are the future of Maine's workforce, please continue to invest in us.

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