

Testimony of Christopher Grotton, Vice President, 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 Christopher Grotton, and I represent Husson University as our Vice President of Student Experience. I am here, along with one of our students, 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 wanting to attend one of Maine's independent colleges or universities.

Husson University changes lives by providing unique educational opportunities at an affordable cost. That's something we've done for more than 25,000 students in our 126-year history. We prepare students for the rigors of the workforce, offering them expedited opportunities to enter fields like physical therapy, occupational therapy, and audio engineering. We're also preparing students for the careers of the future using the latest technology and teaching them to develop for virtual and augmented reality in our iEX Center.

In the greater Bangor community, our PT and OT students offer free services under the supervision of their professors through the SOARing Eagle Healthcare Clinic, allowing uninsured and underinsured patients to get the care they need. Our NESCom students help film The Nite Show at the Gracie Theatre, helping to bring more entertainment to the community. We are an active and engaged campus, always seeking ways for students to get hands-on experience in real life settings and providing a benefit to the community. In terms of positive economic impact, a recent study estimated that Husson University supported \$108 million in total economic output to the regional economy in 2023.

We are a small, private institution focused on preparing Maine students for Maine jobs. In fact, 66% of Husson students are from Maine, and 71% of our graduates remain in our state, bolstering Maine's professional workforce. We are a school of more than 2,700 undergraduate

students, 99% of whom receive and rely on financial aid. The Maine State Grant is essential to that financial aid. This semester, 810 Husson students are receiving the Maine State Grant for approximately \$1.8 million in aid. This is a fraction of the \$28 million budget for the Maine State Grant, but for our students it's tremendous — helping to ensure they can attend college and prepare themselves for the future.

Higher education is transformative, unlocking opportunities and broadening horizons. Within a year of graduation, 92% of Husson students are either employed or pursuing graduate studies. They recognize the profound impact that the career-focused, affordable education at Husson has on their lives. The Maine State Grant helps make this possible for them. Please don't take that money away from our students.

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