



# Maine Community College System

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

323 State Street, Augusta, ME 04330-7131

(207) 629-4000 | Fax (207) 629-4048 | mccs.me.edu

---

**TO: Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy  
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**

**FROM: David Daigler, President, Maine Community College System**

**RE: Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 457 An Act to Fund Climate Resiliency Projects  
Related to the Repair of Campus Infrastructure Used for Active Transportation and  
Outdoor Recreation**

**DATE: March 3, 2025**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am David Daigler, President of the Maine Community College System and I am here today to testify neither for nor against LD 457. I would like to start by saying that I appreciate Senator Carney's dedication to her community and her constituents and her willingness to work with us as she crafted this legislation.

We are here neither for nor against LD 457 because as you well know, the Maine Community College System has three funding priorities this session: an increase to our base budget, support for the Maine Free College initiative, along with language to ensure it becomes an ongoing program, and funds for our share of the newly established paid family medical leave program. All three of these initiatives directly impact our ability to fulfill our statutory obligation to train and educate Maine's workforce. All three allow us to serve thousands of Maine residents across the state as well as work to compensate our employees for their hard work and dedication.

Having said that, no one is more devastated than the SMCC and MCCS communities when winter storm after winter storm batter the edges of the stunning SMCC campus. As some of you know, I am an avid biker and can often be found on the Greenbelt Walkway.

We also do not want chain-link fences blocking access to community members who use the beltway to commute, walk, enjoy the view or grieve a loved one.

As soon as the gravity of the damage to the edges of our campus came to light after the December 2023 storm, we went to work. First, we assured that no one would get injured on unstable ground (hence the chain link fences and no trespassing signs). Then we started to look at funding opportunities to do our best to mitigate further damage and allow public access. However, as I said at the beginning of my testimony, our first responsibility is to educate Maine's workforce. Erosion at SMCC does not only affect the beautiful greenway but also threatens some of our most critical educational buildings. Therefore, any fundraising that is done by MCCS for the Greenbelt cannot be at the expense of our mission and needs to focus on our crumbling infrastructure.

Unfortunately, rising sea levels and climate change will continue to hammer our coastline. This means, we don't get to rebuild Fort Preble as it was. We will have to shore it up and hope to mitigate future damage.

As you heard from Dr. Miller, we are working to evaluate the options with the hopes that community members and other funders who focus on historic preservation or recreation will take a lead in this effort.

We really do appreciate Senator Carney's work and, of course, the funds provided in this bill would be welcome and used, as we use all of our funds, efficiently and for their intended purpose.

Thank you.