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Support for L.D. 680

An Act to Support Higher Education in Maine by Providing Funds to Maine's Community Colleges

Joint Standing Committee of Education and Cultural Affairs
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Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Grimes Williams, Associate Dean of Student Services, Central Maine Community College and I am here today to testify in support of LD 680, An Act to Support Higher Education in Maine by Providing Funds to Maine's Community Colleges.

As you already know, Maine's Community Colleges serve a diverse student body comprised of traditional and non-traditional students.

Hands down, my favorite day each year is graduation. What a great day, a day when we see our diverse student body achieve their educational goal. Graduation and earning a diploma represent an opportunity to career advancement, attaining a credential that serves career promotion, the opportunity to earn more money and have an income that supports one's self or provide for a family.

But how do our students get to graduation? They achieve graduation with the support of recruitment/admission staff, dedicated faculty, research assistance staff in the library, tutoring staff, lab assistant staff, academic advisors and student navigators just to name a few of the many positions that make our institutions hum educating the citizens of Maine.

Because the Community Colleges in Maine are a great value and through legislative support such as Free College, our enrollment continues to grow at all seven of Maine's community colleges.

The LD 680 Student Retention and Success Bill funds will be used to hire additional advisors and student navigators. These professionals will provide personalized guidance, assist with course selection, facilitate access to tutoring and mentoring programs, and help students navigate financial aid and other

support services to enhance retention and overall academic success that leads to graduation.

Each semester I speak with students who tell me the same story: that if it wasn't for this advisor or that navigator having an impactful conversation with them at their lowest moments, then they might have dropped out.

Advisors and Navigators are positions at our colleges that have the one-on-one conversations with students struggling with doubt and uncertainty if they will get to graduation. It is our advisors and navigators that make the difference for our students and L.D. 680 will only improve access for all students to these vitally important men and women on our campuses.