



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
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
FROM: Becky Smith, Director of Government and Community Relations
RE: Testimony in opposition to LD 1759, *An Act to Allow Firefighters to Be Eligible for State College Funding*
DATE: April 28, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Becky Smith, and I am providing testimony in opposition to LD 1759, *An Act to Allow Firefighters to Be Eligible for State College Funding* on behalf of the Maine Community College System.

As this committee well knows, the funds deallocated from Maine's Free College Program in this bill are, in fact, already committed to pay for Maine's current free college students. This is why the funding was included in LD 609, the "Part A" budget. Due to the overwhelming success of the Maine Free College program, all of these funds are needed to support the commitment made by the 131st Legislature.

This committee may be less familiar with the Maine Fire Service Institute (MFSI), authorized in statute (Title 20-A, Chapter 319, §9001) administered by Southern Maine Community College and run primarily from the Brunswick campus. Bills that affect MFSI are generally heard in the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee which is why a \$200,000 allocation to MFSI garnered unanimous support in their biennial budget recommendation to the Appropriations committee.

However, I wanted to share this bit of history with you:

Maine Fire Service Training, now known as Maine Fire Service Institute, began its journey in 1958 as a division of the Maine Department of Education and is now a department of Southern Maine Community College. It came to be because a group of dedicated individuals and groups were able to come together for the benefit of Maine's firefighters and citizens. It was governed by an advisory committee made up of Maine fire chiefs, members of the Maine Federation of Firefighters, insurance underwriters and other municipal and Department of Education members, quite similar to the advisory committee of today. These members were appointed by their respective organizations and were groundbreakers that not only realized the need to train Maine's firefighters but also to train their officers in the areas of firefighting tactics, administration and leadership. This group's highest priority was not the number of students trained but the quality of the education they received, a mission we still hold today.

If you are interested in learning more, please visit their [website](#) or read their latest [newsletter](#).

MFSI has an Advisory Committee comprised of fire chiefs from across the state, from both municipal and volunteer departments, the Maine State Federation of Firefighters, The Professional Fire Fighters of

Maine, MEMA, DOL, Risk Management, the SMCC President, The State Fire Marshall, staff of MFSI and presently, Senator Chip Curry.

MFSI is proud to provide a full range of certification training throughout the state in partnership with municipal and volunteer fire departments. MFSI provides not only training, train-the-trainer programs, administers certification exams and loans out props and training equipment but also goes to the location of the training need.

We know that MFSI, like many of our programs, is resource and staff constrained. In an ideal world, we would be here supporting a bill that creates dedicated positions and includes ongoing funding. The program, like our seven community colleges needs ongoing consistent financial support.

However, this bill which takes one-time funds that benefit the youngest MFSI students and others training to be EMS providers, nurses, plumbers, cybersecurity experts and childcare providers is not something we can support.

We recommend that the committee vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 1759. Thank you.