



**To: Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy**  
**Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**  
**From: Mercedes Pour, EdD, Maine Community College System, [mpour@mainecc.edu](mailto:mpour@mainecc.edu)**  
**Re: Testimony in Support of L.D. 2099, *An Act to Amend Certain Eligibility Requirements for Secondary Students Receiving State Subsidies for Postsecondary Courses***

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Mercedes Pour, Director of College Access and Secondary Partnerships at the Maine Community College System, and I am testifying in support of L.D. 2099 on behalf of the Maine Community College System.

The statute at the heart of this bill is short, but it has become the foundation of one of the largest and most effective collaborations across public education in Maine. On its surface, the Aspirations Program funds early college courses for high school students. In practice, it requires coordination across high schools, CTE centers, the Department of Education, and both public higher education systems. Together, we maintain the communication, systems, and structures that make this opportunity available statewide. Although the MDOE, MCCS, and UMS have signed a memorandum of understanding to articulate the specific parameters and responsibilities of this program, we rely on the statute as the defining scaffold.

The revisions in L.D. 2099 align the statute with the modern landscape and need. When the statute was originally written, it imagined a small number of students traveling to college campuses; that model primarily benefited students who were already college-bound. To expand opportunity, the systems embraced online and concurrent enrollment so students, especially in smaller, rural schools, could take college courses where they are. We removed fees, adopted multiple measures placement, and created the nation's first cross-system online early college portal which now supports shared advising, prevents course duplication, and gives schools real-time enrollment information.

Since the last statute revision, enrollment has increased every year – just as it has nationally. The program now serves over 10,000 students annually. Unfortunately, this growth has not been matched with parallel increases in the Aspirations budget. Both systems have made reimbursement concessions, but those alone cannot sustain current activity. Without an increase in funds allocated, the course limits in L.D. 2099 ensure the sustainability and accessibility of this program. Other revisions strengthen transferability of funded courses and support CTE students by aligning course-taking with career pathways and degrees. All of these

changes reflect recommendations made in the 2022 Maine Early College Report and the subsequent LD 1880 Resolve of the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature.

Aspirations is a tremendous asset to Maine. The national research is clear: students who take early college courses are more likely to enroll in college, persist once there, and complete their college credentials. As Maine's economy increasingly demands post-secondary education and training, we have a responsibility to provide early college opportunities in ways that are both effective and sustainable. The revisions in L.D. 2099 reflect years of collaboration across Maine's education systems, and I encourage committee support to sustain this opportunity for our students.