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To: Senator Susan Deschambault, Representative Charlotte Warren and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety  
From: Becky Smith, Director of Government and Community Relations, 207-629-4015, bsmith@mccs.me.edu  
Re: LD 242, An Act To Support the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission  
Date: February 26, 2021

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I write today on behalf of the Maine Community College System. As you may know, the Maine Fire Service Institute is housed at Southern Maine Community College. To this end, we see the importance of the grant funds that Senator Cyrway seeks in LD 242.

Because MCCS has, as a priority, funding that supports all faculty and staff throughout the System, our official position is neither for nor against the bill, however we support its intent and are willing to continue our administrative role if your committee chooses to continue the funding.

The Live Fire Service Training Facilities Fund was created in 2018 by an act of the legislature. The Maine Community College System receives a modest 4.5% of the current funding (\$67,500) to help administer the grant. This allows most of the funds to go directly to renovation and construction of these vital training centers and provides needed administrative support to the program. As you heard in previous testimony, the past method of training firefighters (by burning existing structures) is no longer feasible. As we learn more about hazardous chemicals and, as safety codes are appropriately enhanced, Maine's fire fighters need safe places to practice and learn.

The three years of funding provided by the legislature allowed for four projects to be completed, but there is more need. As your committee looks at spending priorities for this biennial budget, and into the future, we hope you will consider the training needs of Maine's firefighters. We are very proud of our fire service programs at both SMCC and EMCC and the partnerships we have built throughout the Maine firefighting community.

The Washington Post ran an article (linked [here](#)) in November that featured SMCC's program and its attractiveness to students who already have Bachelor's degrees. The article does a nice job of highlighting our program and how it can lead to a rewarding career in the Fire Services.

Thank you for taking the time to read our testimony. Please let me know if you have any further questions.