



DATE: March 3, 2021
TO: Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs
FROM: Samantha Warren, UMS Director of Government & Community Relations
RE: **LD 277, *An Act To Discontinue the Use of the SAT in Maine Schools***

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs: I am writing today on behalf of the University of Maine System (UMS) to provide testimony to inform the Committee's consideration of LD 277, *An Act To Discontinue the Use of the SAT in Maine Schools*.

Maine's decision to make the SAT the mandated State assessment for high school juniors in order to raise college aspirations and rates of matriculation was well-intended, and there is data that demonstrates the school-day SAT policy was initially effective.

However, in recent years, an increasing number of colleges and universities have moved away from requiring the SAT for admissions, including Maine's public universities. In 2020, the University of Maine became the final institution in the UMS to stop requesting the submission of SAT scores as part of the admissions process, regardless of the major being pursued. There are a number of reasons our universities have become "test-optional," including the potential for bias in standardized tests like the SAT and because we find a more holistic review of applicants to be a better predictor of their college preparedness and performance.

If students do submit SAT scores voluntarily as part of their admissions packet, those results are generally not considered. Instead, what does inform admissions and merit-based financial aid decisions is historical, sustained academic performance, as documented by a student's high school transcript, as well as demonstrated commitment over time to community service, leadership and employment. Specifically, our admissions counselors are looking at the transcript to see grade point average (GPA) and in particular, performance within core courses, as well as the level of rigor of the courses taken relative to the level of opportunity available to the student. The only standardized assessments that may be considered as part of traditional undergraduate admissions to the UMS is, in some cases, results of Advanced Placement (AP) exams.

Please let me know if I can provide additional information on behalf of Maine's public universities about our admissions process.

This Committee may also be interested to know that last year, UMS voluntarily undertook a review of other unintended barriers to equitable access to our public universities that may exist in our admissions process. As a result, with the exception of the University of Maine School of Law, our universities have removed two previously required admissions questions related to the applicant's criminal and disciplinary history so as to eliminate bias and increase educational opportunities especially for those who are low-income or persons of color.