

Testimony of Representative Ed Crockett introducing LD 761, “An Act To Establish the Maine Community College System Pell Grant Match Program”
April 23, 2021

Good morning, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and distinguished colleagues of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Representative Ed Crockett, and I represent part of the City of Portland and part of the Town of Falmouth. I am here today to introduce LD 761, “An Act To Establish the Maine Community College System Pell Grant Match Program.”

This bill, then LD 860 and sponsored by Rep. Brennan, passed this committee last session but died on the table when we adjourned. Rep. Brennan asked if I’d re-present it in the 130th. After all I was a co-sponsor to LD 860 last session, and was happy to ease his plate, even if only slightly.

Six billion dollars (\$6 billion). That’s the amount owed by Mainers for college education loans. Unfortunately, that means one in five Mainers is paying back college education debt.

This has serious ripple effects for them and for the economy:

- 56 percent of Mainers with college loans make reduced retirement contributions
- 60 percent of them have skipped other bill payments to make college loan payments
- 25 percent have missed medical appointments or gone without filling prescriptions due to student debt.

While the University of Maine System and the Community College System have made progress in the past several years to reduce the cost of a college education (frozen tuition, increased scholarship and tuition assistance programs) there is still much to be done.

At this point the estimated cost of the program is \$22 million per year.

LD 860 was amended to grant a match that may not exceed 100% of the amount of funds provided by the Federal Pell Grant that the student received for the academic year in which the student applied. The amendment, which is what we are proposing today, caps the match at up to \$500 annually. Total fiscal note of \$3,6m, or 16.3% of the \$22m need. Of course, we can consider more aggressive steps if so inclined.

The program would require students to first secure financial resources before being eligible for the “last-in money” support provided by this initiative. This bill would directly reduce student debt and allow students to complete a college program.

Equally important, this legislation would prepare the current and next generation workforce to meet the challenges of an ever-changing and evolving economy.

I am happy to answer any questions, but believe the MCCS will be testifying, and their responses would be much more succinct. Thank you very much for your consideration.