

TESTIMONY OF DANIEL W. WALKER
ON BEHALF OF MAINE INDEPENDENT COLLEGES ASSOCIATION

In opposition to LD 761, An Act To Establish the Maine Community College System Pell Grant Match Program

**Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
April 23, 2021**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Daniel Walker, and I am an attorney with Preti Flaherty and I am here today on behalf of the Maine Independent Colleges Association (MICA) to testify in opposition to LD 761.

MICA represents 11 private, nonprofit colleges and universities¹ throughout Maine that serve over 25,000 students, over 7,000 of whom are from Maine. These institutions are located in municipalities of all sizes across the State, from Maine's largest city to small tourist towns and farming communities. Collectively, the 11 institutions are an economic force and an integral part of Maine's Higher Educational eco-system. While they share the attributes of being private and nonprofit, these institutions are highly diverse and serve very different aspects of the educational needs of Maine people. Together they provide nearly \$55 million in financial aid to Maine students.

LD 761 establishes the Maine Community College System Pell Grant Match Program and provides that a student is eligible if the student is a resident of Maine, is eligible for a Federal Pell Grant, and maintains a minimum grade point average. The grant would act as a match of the amounts provided by the Pell Grant. The estimated cost of the program would be \$3.6 million.

We object to this bill as it would only apply to Community College students, when many of our independent schools also have a high level of Pell-eligible students. For example, over half of the students at Thomas College are Pell-eligible and over 60% are first-generation. A better use of \$3.6 million would be for the State to invest it in the Maine State Grant Program, which provides need-based grants to students wherever they want to attend college in Maine.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments, and we look forward to working with the Committee on these issues. Please oppose LD 1248. Thank you.

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¹ Bates College, Bowdoin College, Colby College, College of the Atlantic, Husson University, Maine College of Art, Roux Institute at Northeastern University, St. Joseph's College of Maine, Thomas College, Unity College, and University of New England.