

March 6, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Dr. Lisa Leduc, I am a professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Maine at Presque Isle and I am here to testify in support of LD 512, *An Act to Promote Student Enrollment and Degree Completion in the University of Maine System by Providing Tuition Waivers to Eligible Students*.

As a 20 year faculty member I unfortunately have seen the direct negative impact of COVID 19, the state demographic cliff and the community college tuition waiver on our University of Maine System campus enrollments.

While the Community Colleges are a great source of transfer students for our campuses, 2 year transfers will not keep us alive. We cannot compete with free. For many of our UMS programs, a 2 year transfer makes things like 5 year Masters, 3+3 Law School, and study abroad programming unattainable for students who started in community college.

I strongly believe the legislature should support students looking to go to community college, and I am equally passionate about the need to support students whose goals are more suited to a four year institution. Those goals may include things like graduate school or study abroad or even a more extensive athletic experience; or may be their course of study and career goals is not available at a 2 year school.

Our state is coming out of a most difficult time and it is important that these students, many of whom have never had a "normal" high school experience, be given opportunities to pursue and experience any type of post secondary education.

I encourage you to pass LD 512 to afford equitable opportunities for all Maine families

Finally I would like to thank Senator Tipping for proposing this bill and his outreach to community, academic and administrative stakeholders alike as

he attempts to find a path forward for improved higher education in our state.

Thank you very much for you time and consideration

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