

Jim McClymer
AFUM
LD 512

Good afternoon,

I am Jim McClymer of Glenburn. I am a physics professor at the University of Maine and president of AFUM, the faculty union for the University of Maine System.

I am testifying in favor of LD512 and I thank the sponsor, Senator Tipping, and cosponsors for bringing this bill forward.

As we know the free two years of Community College program provides Maine students unprecedented access to higher education. The program no doubt encouraged students, and their families, to choose to extend their education when they wouldn't have even considered it before. For other students, and their families, it made the choice to go to college, to invest in their and our future, easier to afford. I hope no one needs reminding that graduating from college is good for individuals and good for society.

It is clear that some students chose to enroll in a Community College when they would instead be best served by enrolling initially in a 4-year degree program at a University in the System. Choosing a college is difficult as there are so many possibilities and pathways towards future unimagined when making a decision as a senior in high school. Some Maine students will have more opportunities, and graduate in less time with more to show for their time, had they started at one of our Universities.

College is much more than just collecting credits and it is more than getting general education requirements out of the way. In many majors, such as my own and in related STEM areas, it would be impossible to transfer the science, math, and engineering courses that would allow a student to graduate in 4-years with a bachelor degree, let alone participate in some of the many 4+1 masters programs UMaine or our other Universities offer, or get involved in real research as some of our students do their first or second year.

I expect similar concerns arise with other majors that I am not that knowledgeable about, I expect some of my colleagues will address some of these majors.

This bill provides Maine Students, and their family, with similar program that allows them to choose the best career path for them. Initially enrolling in a UMS University, for many students, provides the students with more opportunities and the likelihood of graduating in less time than if they started at a Community College.

This bill doesn't just provide money, it requires satisfactory progress each year so it is a way towards assisting degree completion. The reduction in cost to attend our state Universities may allow many students to work less hours, providing more time for academic success and academic enrichment. Academic enrichment should not only be available to those finically well off.

This bill also encourages Maine citizens who have left University due to their life circumstances to return to our Universities to complete their degree program. Without the support this bill provides, many of our citizens would be unable complete their degree. As we know, the success of our students is success for all of us.

I ask that you favorably endorse this bill.

Thank you