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To: Senator Chip Curry
Representative Tiffany Roberts
The Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business
From: Becky Smith, Director of Government and Community Relations, Bsmith@mccs.me.edu
Re: Statement in support of LD 1517 *An Act To Establish the Maine Workforce, Research, Development and Student Achievement Institute*
Date: April 27, 2021

Please accept this testimony in support of LD 1517, *An Act To Establish the Maine Workforce, Research, Development and Student Achievement Institute*.

The Maine Community College System's mission, laid out in Maine statute, is to "provide associate degree, diploma and certificate programs directed at the educational, career and technical needs of the state's citizens and the workforce needs of the state's employers." To this end, we fully support the intent of LD 1517.

We are pleased that the sponsor included the Maine Community College System and are looking forward to lending our critical expertise to the Institute.

As President Daigler mentioned in his [State of the Maine Community College System](#) report to the legislature earlier this month:

Our focus is on helping all Mainers get the skills they need for happy, productive lives. Then they lift not only their immediate families, but their entire community, and this entire state.

Today, as vaccines roll out and we see an end of the worst of the pandemic, we have an opportunity like no other in our lifetime. An opportunity to build an even better Maine.

The last time the economy went through a shock of this magnitude was at the end of World War II. And as that war was ending, President Truman appointed a commission to re-examine the role of colleges and universities in the post-war economy.

The Truman Commission recommended, among other things, abandoning the old European concepts in education and developing a curriculum attuned to the needs of the new economy. The commission recommended expanding support for higher education as a way of propelling the post-war economy.

And, yes, they recommended establishing a system of community colleges, and expanding adult education, with a focus on vocational education.

From the beginning, community colleges have flourished, expanding opportunity for millions of Americans. Finely tuned to our role in higher ed, our colleges adapt and update our programs to keep pace with the demands of the modern workforce.

Our students train with sophisticated equipment and are taught by people active in the field. We work hard to keep up with the rapid pace of change.

This year has been a testament to that commitment. But even as technology is changing - it's changing the workplace, it's changing our classrooms - and it's doing so at warp speed, one consistent remains: investing in education provides the foundation we need to build and sustain a broad, strong, and robust economy.

Those investments need to be bold. They need to be strategic.

With the research capacity created by the Institute, your committee will be able to be strategic. You will feel confident to make bold investments knowing that you have the information you need to make informed decisions.

We look forward to getting to work. Thank you.