



**Testimony of Chancellor James Page
University of Maine System**

LD 90 An Act to Strengthen Maine's Workforce and Economic Future

Senator Goodall, Representative Berry, Distinguished members of the Joint Select Committee on Maine's Workforce and Economic Future, I am James Page, Chancellor of the University of Maine System. I'm here today to testify in support of those items within the bill impacting the University of Maine System, specifically:

- Part A, Transfer of Credit;
- Part C, Appropriations and Allocations;
- Part D, Task Force on Adult Learners;
- Part J, Maine Industry Partnerships; and
- Part M, Education Coordinating Committee.

Part A, Transfer of Credit

Consistent with our Board of Trustees' directive to develop a seamless pathway for students within the University of Maine System and between the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System, we are already in the process of implementing the key requirements within this section. This fall, we will have the administrative and technical infrastructure in place to support this program and to transfer general education credits across our System. Although all of our campuses already award academic credit based on the assessment of prior learning, we will also bring all of our policies into closer alignment and consistency across all of our campuses. Soon after, we will have paths developed between similar majors to assure that students can maximize their credits within the major as they transfer between our campuses. As this work proceeds within our own System, we will collaborate with the Maine Community College System to ensure that similar pathways are developed. Our first focus for this component will be the STEM, nursing and business programs. That said, we are concerned that the specific reference to a January 1, 2014 date in Section A-2 for those degree programs is overly optimistic. We suggest the Committee request

that we make those a priority, as outlined under the section on Articulation agreements on page 1 of the working draft.

An additional component of our collaboration with the Maine Community College System will be the development of what is known as “reverse transfer.” With the national goal of 60% of the nation attaining a degree or related credential by 2025, the ability to maximize the receipt of credentials by its citizens is a critical component in any state’s workforce development plan. Further, it helps to motivate students to go on and complete the next degree, in this case a baccalaureate degree.

Finally, while we understand the logical appeal of a common course numbering system, and support studying its feasibility, we may find that implementing such a system could negatively impact all of the other critical work that must be completed related to credit transfer. We therefore request that an edit be made to the legislation such that it is clear that “a plan and schedule for implementation” will only be required if the study results in a solution which is achievable in a reasonable timeframe and cost, and in a way that adds value to the transfer process.

Part C, Appropriations and Allocations

As we know, aiding Maine’s students in the achievement of their degree is of paramount importance. Adults in Maine with “some college but no degree” exceed 230,000. One of the major barriers they have to degree completion is financial. Many times, they do not qualify for financial aid because they are employed and so earn more than what would enable them to qualify for federal aid. Also, because they are employed, they cannot attend full time, which many times can eliminate them from consideration for other types of financial support such as scholarships. We currently have an “adult reentry” scholarship at the University of Southern Maine which was possible through an endowment from a national Foundation. This scholarship has enabled many more adults to enroll in and remain in college through to the completion of their degree. This appropriation request would enable us, with matching funds, to extend this opportunity to many more Maine adult students. Although a minor point, we would recommend the Committee consider amending the appropriation in Part C to include the full \$2.3m request in the second year of the biennium instead of splitting it evenly between the two fiscal years. This will allow us the appropriate time to work out the details of the scholarship program, and more importantly, for us to market the scholarship program to ensure we get the results we want.

Part D, Task Force on Adult Learners

The 230,000 of our fellow Maine citizens having some college but not attaining their degree represents an enormous cost in terms of the of students' and families' stranded financial investment, their compromised hopes and aspirations, and its negative impact on the development of a workforce responsive to the needs of Maine employers. There is substantial work occurring nationally related to adult degree completion, much of it supported by the Lumina Foundation. All of the best practice related to this work indicates that the development and implementation of a comprehensive, collaborative state plan that brings together all of the resources within the state devoted to adult degree completion is the best opportunity to maximize the success and completion of this critical population to a state's economic future.

Part J, Maine Industry Partnerships: Industry Partnerships, Participating Agency Cooperation

As you have seen in the press and as was mentioned in my State of the System address, the University of Maine System is working in partnership with many of the leading businesses in the state to expand the pool of Maine computer scientists, computer engineers and information technology specialists. This project is an outstanding example of a collaborative approach to developing pathways, programs and supports geared toward addressing critical workforce needs. The language within this section of the legislation implies the further development of similar collaborative approaches to meeting the state's needs – we are supportive of this and are ready to participate fully.

Part M, Education Coordinating Committee

The University of Maine System is supportive of the intent behind the expansion of the members of the Education Coordinating Committee as proposed by this Committee. I want to highlight the point that we ask much of our volunteer Boards who respond very generously with their time and energy. I would ask that legislative language reflect the various Board Chair memberships, but not the expectation that they attend every meeting.

I want to thank the Committee for all of your hard work and for the opportunity to testify this morning. I'd be happy to answer any questions that you might have.