



Craig Larrabee
President/CEO

March 4, 2015

The Hon. Brian Langley, Senate Chair
The Hon. Victoria Kornfield, House Chair
and Members of the Joint Select Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Re: LD 215, *An Act To Improve Student Retention in Maine's Postsecondary Institutions*

Dear Sen. Langley, Rep. Kornfield and members of the Education Committee:

As president and CEO of Jobs for Maine's Graduates, I'm writing in support of LD 215, *An Act to Improve Student Retention in Maine's Postsecondary Institutions*.

JMG has a long history of serving students in Maine high schools and middle schools who face complex barriers and obstacles to their education that increase their likelihood of failure or dropping out. Students who participate in JMG are excelling in Maine schools and getting prepared for life after high school – whether that means a career or attending school to earn a certificate, two-year, or four-year degree.

But life after high school is different. And though JMG students are succeeding in high school, what we have found is that while more than 50% of our students are choosing to attend post-secondary education, only 30% of them are completing their certificate program or degree within 6 years. We know these students, and we believe that by partnering with Maine colleges and universities we can increase that success rate significantly in a short period of time.

Since 2014 JMG has been partnering with Thomas College to provide support for JMG students on its campus through a JMG Advisor. This partnership grew out of conversations with Thomas College President Laurie Lachance and Larry Sterrs from the Unity Foundation.

The role of the JMG Advisor is to assess and understand the unique needs of each student and help them navigate the existing resources available on the campus, and give them a place to go when they need guidance and assistance. The support services include: academic and social mentoring and counseling, creating individualized academic plans for each student to accomplish their goals and meet their needs; developing a system of peer mentoring for these students; and providing students with financial guidance and advice on financial aid.

LD 215 enables JMG, by statute, to provide “postsecondary services” for the purpose of “significantly increasing the percentage of eligible students who obtain a postsecondary degree.” The eligible students include students who participated with JMG in middle or high school, students who have been in or are currently in foster care, and students who have earned a high school equivalency diploma in the previous five years.

Why these students?

As our JMG specialists often say, “there is no such thing as a typical JMG student.” The same adage applies to youth out of foster care and older youth seeking education. What unites them is that you can’t sum up these students in one description, because each student has circumstances unique to them. Just as they arrive at their circumstances differently, their needs must be met in a way that is comprehensive, personal, and adaptable to each student. The JMG model is designed for that, and we know that it is working, and will continue to work on college campuses across the state.

Why a partnership with JMG?

JMG’s presence at Maine high schools and middle schools is well-known, but our partnerships with other educational groups are what make us uniquely qualified to lead this effort on campuses throughout our state. JMG already works with foster care youth in York and Cumberland counties through the Maine Youth Transition Collaborative and the Southern Maine Youth Transition Network. And we already work with Goodwill Industries, Adult Ed, and LearningWorks to address the needs of older youth.

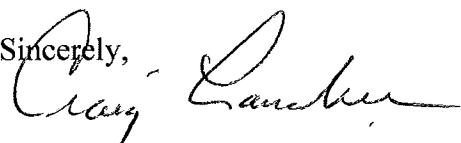
All of the expertise and puzzle pieces are there – and we are ready to connect them in a meaningful way for Maine students. Attached is a one-page overview of LD 215 that highlights those connections.

New partnerships for Maine students

LD 215 would make the state a partner in this exciting endeavor so we can more quickly expand and extend this opportunity to more students across Maine. The statutory authority and funding provided in this bill will open new doors for JMG, the campuses we partner with, and most importantly – the students.

JMG has the existing relationships to identify these students and get them what they need to succeed – and with your help, through this bill, we will leverage private funds to meet the full need of these students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of LD 215 and for your consideration as a committee.

Sincerely,


Craig Larrabee
President/CEO

JMIG

WE BELIEVE IN MAINE STUDENTS

LD 215 An Act To Improve Student Retention in Maine's Postsecondary Institutions

Sponsor:

◆ Sen. *Alford*
of Portland

Co-sponsors:

◆ Speaker *Eves*
of North Berwick

◆ Rep. *Fredette*
of Newport

◆ Sen. *Katz*
of Kennebec

◆ Sen. *Langley*
of Hancock

◆ Rep. *Maker*
of Calais

◆ Rep. *McCabe*
of Skowhegan

◆ Sen. *Millett*
of Cumberland

◆ President *Thibodeau*
of Waldo

◆ Sen. *Valentino*
of York

Who supports this bill?

◆ Governor LePage

◆ Legislative Leaders

◆ JMIG

◆ Maine State Chamber

◆ Univ. of Maine System

◆ Maine Community
College System

◆ Maine Development
Foundation

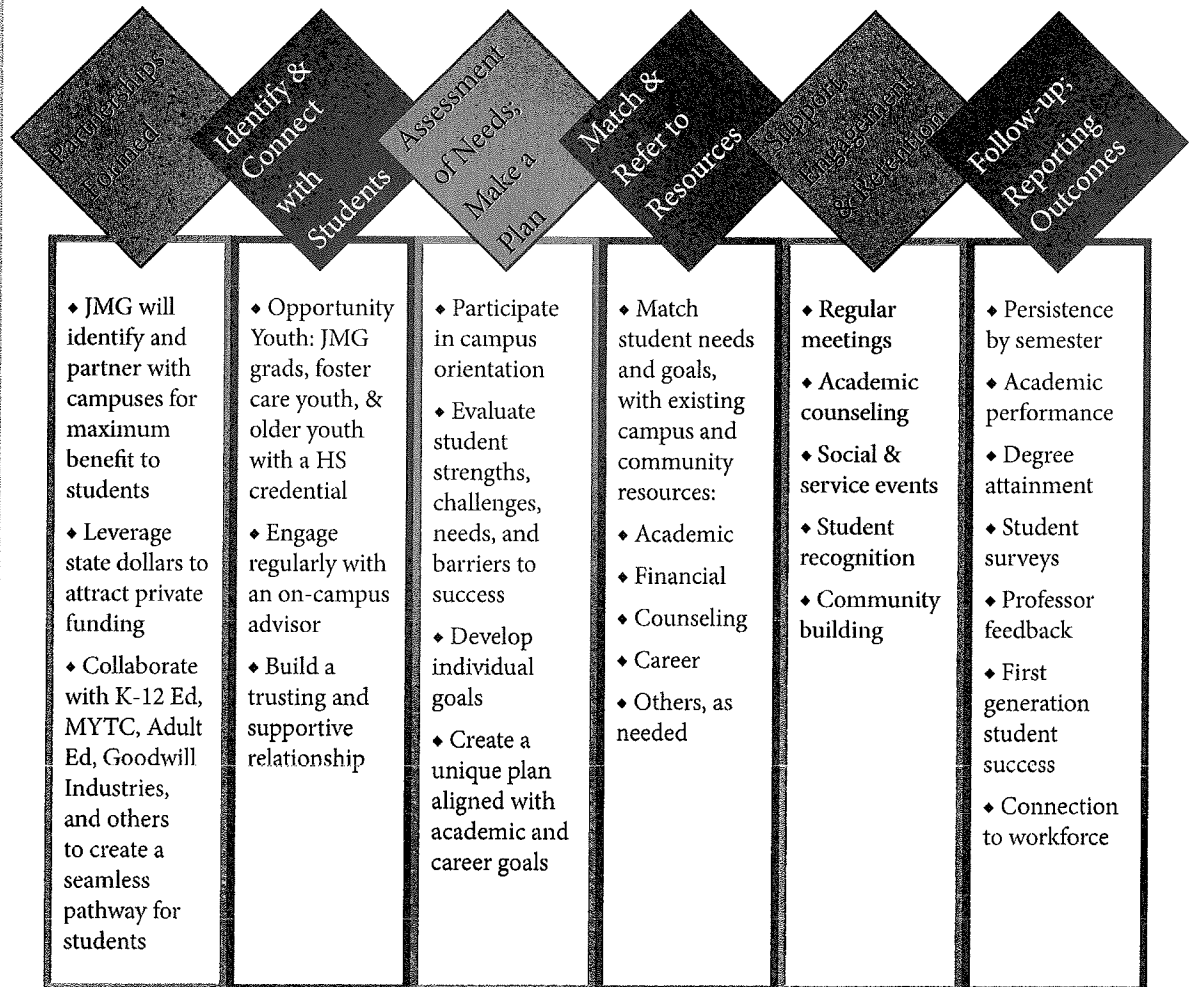
◆ Maine Youth Transition
Collaborative (MYTC)

◆ Southern Maine Youth
Transition Network

JMIG

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Through this innovative partnership with Maine colleges and universities, JMIG will provide on-campus support to JMIG graduates, youth from foster care, and older students with high school equivalency, offering guidance and connecting students to available campus and community resources, so they can achieve their post-secondary educational goals, whether that means completing a certificate, two-year, or four-year degree.



“Every student is different — their home life, their academic needs and goals, their social circles. My job is to be another set of eyes. To help students get the services they need. The key to this program is the connection we make with each student, how we understand their story, and help them take ownership of their education beyond high school in order to achieve their goals.”

- Matt Reynolds, Thomas College JMIG Specialist