

Testimony of

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Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

LD 215, "An Act to Improve Student Retention in Maine's Postsecondary Institutions"

**Wednesday, March 4, 2015
1:00 p.m., Cross Office Building, Room 202**

Senator Langley, Representative Kornfield and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, good afternoon.

My name is Gary Crocker and I represent the Maine Community College System. I'm here this afternoon to testify in support of LD 215, "An Act to Improve Student Retention in Maine's Postsecondary Institutions."

This bill requests funds to hire 4 navigators to work with 50 students each at four institutions of higher education. One of the most effective ways to improve college retention and graduation is the use of navigators to provide ancillary support services to students. As you know, the recent report of the Commission on College Affordability and Completion recommends hiring 27 navigators to serve our seven colleges, and we hope you will give that recommendation serious consideration when it is before you.

We see LD215, if approved, as being complimentary to our efforts to bring more navigators to our colleges. If JMG chooses to work with one or more of our colleges, we would need to develop a contract to address liability concerns, FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) compliance as well as requirements of our accreditation through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

While we are in support of LD215, our first priority is to increase funding to address our base budget needs. Presently we are flat funded which will cause significant challenges ahead in that we will have no choice but to reduce programs and services.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. I'd be glad to address any questions.