



**TESTIMONY OF  
ROSA REDONNETT  
UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM**

**TO THE JOINT STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

**Regarding LD 215 – An Act to Improve Student Retention in Maine’s Postsecondary Institutions  
March 4, 2015**

Chair Langley, Chair Kornfield, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Rosa Redonnett, Chief Student Affairs Officer at the University of Maine System. On behalf of the University of Maine System, I am here today to speak in support of LD 215, an act designed to provide additional supports to enable more at risk students to be successful in their completion of college.

Jobs for Maine’s Graduates has an excellent reputation for helping students at risk attain and surpass their life goals, whether that be in the pursuit of higher education and/or in the identification and success at a chosen career, all leading up to a happy and productive life as an adult. Students at risk, and especially those in foster care, face numerous challenges along the way to higher education and ultimately to a career – for example, they may be and usually are first generation potential college attendees, they may have experienced gaps in their academic and social preparation along the pathway to higher education and they have faced difficult home situations which can limit their options, their outlook and their ultimate success later in life.

JMG has experience working with these students whether they are youth in care, older students who may have completed their high school equivalency or students who came out of JMG programs. Relying on our traditional methods of encouraging students to stay in school and graduate (eg, retaining them and having them persist through to graduation) may not be as effective with these students as they can be difficult to identify, reach and influence. Mentoring and support are critical for these students, and none more so than that which can occur to help a student become and remain successful in college, and especially that support delivered by a trusted mentor who understands your background and complex barriers. JMG is an ideal partner with whom to work to provide the additional support these students need in order to be successful and complete a degree or credential, and certainly their work with Thomas College has shown the positive impact of this collaborative support.

The partnership that could develop between the JMG counselor and the advising and success staff at our campuses would benefit the student in many ways, and would be a win-win for JMG, our campuses, the students being served and our current students who could be a part of a peer

mentoring network. The additional support in guiding them through the complexities of funding a college education, combined with the resources we have around financial literacy would be an ideal combination to help ensure that they complete their degrees in a timely way, all coordinated through an individualized academic plan.

In order to ensure the smooth provision of academic and financial support, one element that would need to be added would be some kind of MOU between JMG and whatever institutions were selected to ensure that issues like FERPA were resolved and to ensure that all parties were clear as to respective responsibilities, but we do not see that as a barrier to moving this act to approval.

In closing, this is a wonderful opportunity to focus our collective efforts on a group at risk, utilizing those supports that can have the most impact on a student's ultimate success. Helping them achieve a degree and literally transform their lives will contribute to the economic, social and workforce vitality needed for Maine. The University of Maine System welcomes this partnership and stands ready to take the next steps with JMG at whatever campus or campuses are most appropriate.

I would like to thank the Committee for providing the opportunity to present the University of Maine System's response to this legislation.