



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:

Senator Langley, Representative Kornfield, and members of the Education Committee: My name is Nicole Padilla. I am from Milo, Maine, and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 215, An Act to Improve Student Retention in Maine's Postsecondary Institutions. I want to share with you my thoughts on this bill from my perspective as a current student at Thomas College.

Since my sophomore year in high school, I've been affiliated with Jobs for Maine's Graduates. Through out high school I struggled with a lot of things, personal and academically—but the one person who never gave up on me and who was always there whenever I needed to talk was my JMG advisor Shannon Bishop. When I was a senior in high school I had to make the decision to either buck up or not graduate. During the fall of 2013, I was chosen along with a select few other students to attend a National Student Leadership Conference in Washington D.C for JMG. I can honestly tell you attending that conference enhanced my motivation immensely. On June 1, 2014 I graduated from Penquis Valley High School with honors.

The thought of furthering my education at Thomas College made me scared. I always had support from JMG in high school and now I was forced to face college alone – or, so I had thought. When I was informed that Thomas had the first ever



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college JMG program, I was ecstatic. I was convinced that God was watching over me and had sent Matt Reynolds to do so. Late in my fall semester I started to stress about how I would be able to come up with the money for the following spring term. My mother who is 59, is working two jobs to support my academics but even her best wasn't enough. All she could tell me was to put it in God's hands. My grades started slipping due to my stress, and Matt, the JMG Specialist at Thomas, reached out to me. I then told him I felt like I was wasting my time and effort because I had no idea if I would be returning to school. He made a few phone calls and told me to come into his office for some good news. The good news being that JMG had granted me a scholarship, paying my bill in full. Trying to hold in my tears, I could not even believe what was just said. Again, JMG was there at my lowest point bringing me back up once more. I had never felt so invested in, and it was then again that my motivation was enhanced by the acts of JMG. I ended my fall semester with a 3.45 GPA and my name on the Dean's list.

I am strongly in favor of LD 215 because JMG really does believe in Maine students, and I am living proof.

Thank you so much for your time today and for listening to why I support LD215. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Nicole Padilla
JMG Thomas College Student