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February 10, 2022

Testimony of Sen. Chloe Maxmin introducing
LD 1789, An Act to Modernize Funding of Publicly Funded Tuition Students
Attending Career and Technical Education Programs
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and honorable members of Education and Cultural Affairs—

My name is Chloe Maxmin. I represent Senate District 13, which includes all of Lincoln County except for Dresden, plus Washington and Windsor—a total of twenty-seven towns. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of LD 1789, An Act to Modernize Funding of Publicly Funded Tuition Students Attending Career and Technical Education Programs.

I represent two Town Academies: Erskine Academy in Windsor and Lincoln Academy in Newcastle. I am also a proud alum of Lincoln Academy. For my four years there and to this day, I have to explain: we're not really public. We're not really private. But we can go there for free, like a normal public school. Often, during my times at Lincoln Academy, this middle status often meant that we were under resourced and understaffed.

Now, as a Legislator, I have learned how Town Academies in Maine face an intricate set of challenges that threaten their survival and therefore the opportunity for many Maine students to attend a "public" high school. These challenges are neither greater nor lesser than the challenges faced by traditional public schools. They're simply different, and they require our attention.

LD 1789 addresses one of the hurdles facing Town Academies: funding for CTE education. The funding formulas behind this are very complicated. I point you to Jeff Burroughs, the Head of School at Lincoln Academy, to explain the nuances and answer your detailed questions. In the meantime, here is a quick overview.

Under current law, a school that receives publicly funded tuition students who are enrolled at CTE centers may charge a tuition rate of **only** up to 2/3 of the maximum allowable tuition (MAT) rate. This means that the **school does not collect** 1/3 of the tuition. For schools like Lincoln Academy, this is costing them almost an extra \$250,000 a year. Loss of this 1/3 hurts all the students, not just those attending CTEs, as it takes money out of pocket from the Town Academies that otherwise could go towards in-school services.

Many schools, both public and private, accept publicly funded tuition students. But this most affects Town Academies as they are composed almost entirely of publicly tuitioned students. Traditional public schools are not penalized when a non-tuitioned student chooses to attend a CTE.

This bill removes this limitation of a 2/3 maximum on schools approved for tuition purposes. It also phases out this repeal over three years, to make it easier on the sending town. Schools will contribute more directly to support CTE and be provided a place at the CTE table.

Part of the challenge here is that the MAT is far below the actual high school cost in Maine, and the sending school must also provide transportation to the CTE. So the real costs are not reflecting in the funding provided or allowed in statute. These schools, like Lincoln Academy, must still fully support the students attending a CTE program, still providing full services.

There are two more points that I'd like to make. First, one may ask, where will this additional 1/3 come from? It does come from the sending towns, but it is phased in over three years. Towns haven't been paying the full MAT for Town Academy students attending CTE centers. As Mr. Burroughs can explain, the total cost per town for the students attending CTE centers is actually quite small.

Second, many of the stakeholders behind this bill having been meeting with DOE for a total of five times since September in an effort to find a compromise around this challenge. I know as well that there was tension last Session in this Committee around challenges facing the Town Academies. I've learned a lot about this issue and the dynamics over the past year, and I ask for open minds as we move forward. The people who suffer if we cannot fix this issue are students who seek CTE education. Let's fight for their opportunities instead of getting bogged down in politics.

Thank you all for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,
Chloe Maxmin