

Lucille Willey
Director, Coastal Washington County Institute of Technology

I am testifying to ask for approval of LD 1942, an Act to Ensure Equity in Career and Technical Education Staffing Support Ratios Across Varied Regions of the State.

We are one of the State of Maine' 27 Career and Technical Centers and Regions. We are located in Western Washington County and draw from four area high schools. We enroll juniors and seniors from Narraguagus Jr/Sr High School, Machias Memorial High School, Jonesport-Beals High School, and Washington Academy. Schools east of Washington Academy are in the catchment area of St. Croix Technical Center in Calais. A 3-year average enrollment of juniors and seniors in our four sending schools totals about 350 students. We currently have a total of 10 programs. In order for us to receive subsidy at a full time enrollment basis, the enrollment in each class has to be 13 over a 3 year average. Thirteen times 10 programs is 130 students, which is 37% of the total age appropriate enrollment of the schools in our catchment area. This year our total enrollment has been below that 130; next year it looks like it will be over, but the funding formula is per program, and there is no guarantee that there will be 13 in each program. That is an average. It also does not allow for adding more programs; programs that are badly needed in Washington County.

If this formula were to be changed to an 8 to 1 ratio, that would be a game changer for us as well as many other small CTE centers in Maine. The students in Washington County need workforce skills in order to be able to make a living in Downeast Maine and not be forced to leave and go to more populated areas. Our communities need to have skilled workers to help to improve the economy. It is not an equitable formula when Western Washington County is funded at the same ratio as Lewiston Tech, or Capital Area, or UTC. If one of those centers starts a new program, regardless of what it is, they are quite likely to get a total of 13 students. We struggle to get 13 in our most popular programs, just because of the number of students we are pulling from.

Again, it would be an absolute game changer for us to have the formula change to an 8 to 1 ratio.