

Colleen Brown
Whiting
LD 2147

To the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

I am writing as a Maine resident and taxpayer regarding LD 2147.

I support the goal of this bill, which is to strengthen career and college readiness for Maine students. Preparing young people for the workforce, especially in high-need regions, is one of the smartest investments this Legislature can make. However, I am deeply concerned that this bill limits funding to only Androscoggin and Oxford Counties while leaving other high-need rural areas, including Washington County, out of the equation.

Washington County faces some of the highest rates of poverty, the fewest postsecondary and career training options, and some of the longest travel distances to access education and employment. Our students are just as deserving of career pathways, technical training, and college readiness supports as students in more politically visible regions of the state.

When workforce investment is targeted only to certain counties, it sends a message that some Maine students matter more than others. That is not how statewide economic development should work.

If Maine is serious about growing its workforce, keeping young people in the state, and supporting rural communities, this bill should be expanded to include all high-need counties, including Washington County and other rural regions that face even greater barriers to opportunity.

I urge the committee to either amend LD 2147 to make this funding available statewide or to include additional counties that face similar or greater challenges.

Thank you for considering my testimony and for your work on this important issue.