

February 24, 2026

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

As Chair of the United Technologies Center Steering Committee, and as someone who has worked in Career and Technical Education for more than twenty years, I am writing in support of the proposed amendments to Chapter 115 and to encourage thoughtful inclusion of Career and Technical Education (CTE) endorsement areas within the expanded portfolio pathway framework.

Over the past two decades, I have seen Maine's CTE system evolve to meet the changing needs of students and employers. Our programs today are more rigorous, more industry-aligned, and more accountable than ever before. At the same time, the challenge of recruiting and retaining qualified CTE instructors has grown increasingly complex.

CTE instructors do not typically follow a traditional pathway into education. Most enter the classroom after significant careers in industry. They bring trade licenses, professional certifications, supervisory experience, and current technical knowledge that is directly aligned to Maine's workforce demands. These are not entry-level professionals. They are experienced practitioners choosing to serve students.

Yet the certification process has not always reflected that professional journey. While high standards must remain in place, requirements that duplicate existing expertise or fail to recognize prior professional experience can unintentionally discourage strong candidates from entering the field.

As Chair, I work closely with Steering Committee members who mentor new instructors each year. We help them navigate certification requirements, identify appropriate coursework, and meet state expectations while they are simultaneously building new programs, managing labs, and teaching complex technical skills. The proposed updates to Chapter 115 would better support that work.

Modernizing certification language, reducing unnecessary duplication, and allowing structured flexibility within a framework of state oversight are responsible and necessary improvements. These changes do not weaken standards. Instead, they better connect certification to demonstrated competency and meaningful professional experience.

The portfolio pathway reflects a model that recognizes the value of experience while maintaining accountability. A structured process that pairs prior industry knowledge with mentorship and targeted professional development aligns closely with how CTE instructors are already supported at the regional level. Extending this opportunity to CTE endorsement areas would strengthen recruitment, improve retention, and enhance program stability without compromising rigor.

When CTE positions remain unfilled, programs stall and students lose access to training that leads directly to employment in high-demand fields across Maine. Thoughtful updates to Chapter 115 will help ensure that certification policy supports, rather than hinders, the continued strength of our CTE system.

I respectfully support advancement of the proposed amendments and encourage inclusion of Career and Technical Education within the expanded portfolio framework as this work moves forward.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Maine students, educators, and workforce development.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Beswick". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large initial "J" and "B".

Jeffrey Beswick, Chair  
United Technologies Center - Steering Committee  
Bangor, Maine

Jeffrey Beswick  
Region 4 UTC  
LD 2175

Please see attached.