

Testimony of Simon West for The Maine State Chamber of Commerce In Support  
of

L.D. 436 An Act to Provide Career and Technical Education Students with Credit  
Toward High School Graduation for Work Completed in Career and Technical  
Education Centers and Regions

Chairs Rafferty and Brennan, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Simon West. I reside in Gardiner and I represent the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, a statewide business association made up of both large and small businesses, here to provide you with my testimony in support of giving students enrolled in career and technical education programs credit toward high school graduation for the work they complete in those career and technical education programs.

The Maine State Chamber supports efforts to expand experiential learning and career and technical education. Among the workforce challenges Maine employers are experiencing, a mismatch of skills to fit job needs is a top concern. Many of our members have relied on partnerships with career and technical education providers to craft a viable talent pipeline and ensure that the newest generation of our workforce has the appropriate skills to build rewarding careers. For some time employers have struggled with the number of students enrolling in CTE programs and a depleting talent pool in trade and technical occupations. Under the Mill's administration CTE programs have made significant strides in enrollment and growth. As these programs have grown some barriers that students experience as they approach program completion have come to light. One of these barriers is a student's ability to meet their core credit requirements for graduation while attending CTE. There are many instances where a student must choose between taking their final math, science, or language arts credit, or completing their CTE program.

When students must choose between graduating from high school and completing their CTE program it is an injustice to the student, the program, and Maine's economy. It is in everyone's best interest that school units and CTE centers work together to create equivalency across education requirements whenever possible. The Westbrook Regional Vocational Center has shown the validity of this measure by giving students the opportunity to show how their work in a vocational program meets core graduation requirements. Through the maintenance of portfolios students can demonstrate their ability to meet district graduation standards and career readiness.

On behalf of our members and the business community at large the State Chamber has taken policy positions that aim to expand the size and abilities of our future workforce. This legislation eliminates a very real barrier that students experience. I ask that you give LD436 your support.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our testimony.