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Testimony on
L.D. 1627, “An Act Regarding Workforce Development, Education Reform and Talent Retention”

Presented by
Representative Russell P. White
District 13

Education and Cultural Affairs Committee
Thursday, April 24, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

I am State Representative Russell P. White, and I proudly represent District 13, Central Hancock, Ellsworth, and Waltham. It is an honor to appear before you today for the purpose of introducing L.D. 1627, “*An Act Regarding Workforce Development, Education Reform and Talent Retention.*”

This bill is a response to what I’ve heard time and time again from superintendents, business owners, parents, and students – “*We are overdue for a reset in how we prepare young people for the world beyond high school.*”

Right now, the vast majority of students are guided toward one pathway -- a four-year degree. However, many of those same students either don’t complete that degree, or graduate with debt and no clear career direction.

Meanwhile, employers across Maine are facing historic labor shortages — not just in the trades, but in healthcare, manufacturing, forestry, and marine industries. These are good jobs, and many do not require a bachelor’s degree.

Over, please

L.D. 1627 aims to realign the system by doing the following.

- It requires students to complete a work-based learning experience, like an internship, apprenticeship, or co-op, before they graduate. These experiences aren't just résumé-builders, they're also confidence-builders. They help students make informed decisions about their future.
- It brings career awareness into middle school, since by the time many students are seriously considering their options, it's already late in the game.
- It removes the incentive to push every student toward college simply for the sake of college. Instead, it asks schools to track how students fare, whether they go on to higher education, a certification program, or straight into a job. We should value all of those outcomes.

This proposal likewise includes support for Maine's employers, with tax credits for those offering student loan assistance, childcare, or relocation support to help bring people into the workforce, especially in our rural communities.

I want to stress that this bill is **fiscally responsible**. It does not create new spending. It reallocates funds, prioritizes efficiency, and ties programs to measurable outcomes.

This is about setting our students up for success, however defined, and giving them more reasons to build their lives here in Maine. It's also about giving taxpayers a better return on the investment we're already making in public education and workforce development.

Thank you for your time, and I respectfully ask for your support of L.D. 1627.