

State of Maine
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Testimony of Michael T. Perry, Director of the Office of Higher Education and Educator Supports

In Support of: L.D. 1163

An Act to Foster Career and Technical Education in Maine Schools by Creating an Additional Pathway to Certify Industrial Arts Teachers

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Sponsored by: Rep. Carlow

Co-Sponsored by: Senators Rafferty, Libby and President Daughtry and Representatives Crockett, Dodge, Lyman, Murphy, and Sargent

Date: April 25, 2025

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

My name is Michael Perry, the Director of the Office of Higher Education and Educator Support for the Maine Department of Education, and I am here today representing the Department speaking in support of LD 1163, An Act to Foster Career and Technical Education in Maine Schools by Creating an Additional Pathway to Certify Industrial Arts Teachers.

First, it is useful to the conversation of this legislation to accurately differentiate between “Industrial Arts” (IA) and “career and technical education” (CTE). Industrial Arts – colloquially called “shop class” by some in the past – is a PK-12 teaching area designed for a general education setting. In other words, it is a course that students of all ages can take for an overview of the knowledge and practical skills associated with working with tools, machines, and materials.

Career and technical education, by contrast, is defined in Title 20-A, MRS §8301-A as “a course or program of education designed to create or improve job-related skills that is part of a secondary school or middle school level curriculum.” These programs offer specific expertise and experience focused on a trade or trades. While IA provides an overview of basic knowledge or skills and can spark an interest in further study, CTE provides Maine students with the opportunity for relevant and challenging applied learning to enhance their occupational, personal, and academic success while preparing them to meet the needs of the Maine workforce.

The Maine Department of Education (DOE) is supportive of efforts to expand certification pathways for prospective educators, and also supports districts’ inclusion of industrial arts into their curricular options for students. Both IA and CTE have a place in Maine schools.

State Board of Education Rule Chapter 115 describes the requirements that all prospective teachers must meet to teach in Maine schools. Where IA is a course in a general education setting, IA teachers are credentialed in a manner similar to that of other PK-12 general education teachers, e.g. physical education, theater, and computer technology. This includes coursework on teaching methods relevant to the certification area, coursework on teaching students with exceptionalities in the regular classroom, coursework on human development, and student teaching.

This bill addresses a major hurdle to the earning of the IA endorsement. Applicants who have graduated from a state-approved program in industrial arts teacher education can earn certification through Eligibility Pathway 1; others can have their application sent through transcript analysis by DOE staff through Eligibility Pathway 2. Unfortunately, while some institutions in Maine offer a portion of the coursework necessary for IA certification, there are currently no approved pathway 1 programs available in the State of Maine. As such, it is necessary. This lack of access to traditional IA educator pathways in Maine further strengthens the argument to embrace alternative methods of certification that recognize professional expertise and experience.

The DOE supports the expansion of a continued role for experiential learning in industrial/technological arts in a general education setting. These learning opportunities have the potential to expose students to new skillsets, spark an interest in the trades, and build a bridge to CTE for students who would thrive in that setting. We recognize that a creative solution to increasing the number of professionals with the IA endorsement is needed for these programs to thrive.

The Department of Education is in support of LD 1163, An Act to Foster Career and Technical Education in Maine Schools by Creating an Additional Pathway to Certify Industrial Arts Teachers. I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have, and I will be available for work sessions on this bill.