

State of Maine
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Testimony of Dr. Tom Keller, Chair of the Certification and Higher Education Committee of the State Board of Education

Against: 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: Representative Carlow

Date: April 22, 2025

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

My name is Tom Keller and I live in Newcastle. I serve on the Maine State Board of Education and chair its Certification and Higher Education Committee. I am here today to testify against L.D. 1163 An Act to Foster Career and Technical Education in Maine Schools by Creating an Additional Pathway to Certify Industrial Arts Teachers on behalf of the Maine State Board of Education.

While expanding pathways for industrial arts teacher certification may seem beneficial, LD 1163 presents several concerns that could undermine the quality and integrity of Maine's Career and Technical Education (CTE) and broader public education system. The following arguments highlight the key issues with this proposal to consider:

1. Undermines Existing Teacher Certification Standards (Chapter 115 Review Process)

Maine's teacher certification rules known as Chapter 115, including those for industrial arts, are currently under review as per the direction of this committee. Introducing a separate legislative pathway before this process is complete could create inconsistencies, lower standards, and disrupt ongoing efforts to modernize and align teacher certification requirements. The proper venue for changes to certification should remain within the Maine State Board of Education's rulemaking process rather than through legislative intervention.

2. Lowers the Bar for Teacher Certification

The bill allows individuals to qualify for an industrial arts endorsement with minimal formal teacher preparation, relying primarily on apprenticeship experience, a two-year degree, and work hours. However, being an expert in a trade does not necessarily translate to effective classroom instruction. Strong pedagogical training, classroom management skills, and an understanding of student learning needs are crucial for success in educational settings.

3. Creates a Disjointed Certification System

This legislation would establish a separate certification pathway for industrial arts that differs from existing CTE teacher certification requirements. Career and Technical Education instructors must currently meet rigorous qualifications that include pedagogical training and ongoing professional development. By creating a different and potentially less rigorous path for industrial arts teachers, LD 1163 risks creating inequities in educator preparation and confusing certification policies.

4. Ignores the Broader Scope of Industrial Arts in Education

Industrial arts programs in traditional schools differ significantly from full-scale CTE programs. While this bill focuses on technical skills (e.g., welding, carpentry, and CAD), industrial arts teachers must also integrate STEM concepts, problem-solving, and project-based learning into their instruction. This requires comprehensive teacher training that includes education pedagogy—not just trade experience.

5. Weakens Student Learning Outcomes

Teachers who lack formal training in education methods may struggle with differentiated instruction, classroom engagement, and curriculum development. Without sufficient preparation in these areas, students could receive an inconsistent and less effective learning experience, ultimately impacting their skill development and future career readiness.

6. Circumvents Accountability and Oversight

Current teacher certification pathways ensure that educators meet state-approved standards for quality and effectiveness. By allowing a new route that bypasses traditional oversight mechanisms, this bill risks diluting the state's ability to ensure all industrial arts educators are fully prepared to teach and support Maine students.

Please allow me to point out that Maine has multiple industrial arts and career and technical education endorsements and a variety of pathway to gain these endorsements. We have a pK-12 700 industrial arts/technology education endorsement and will be proposing a 701 technology and engineering endorsement. Our CTE teacher endorsements in grades 6-12 can be obtained through any one of 5 eligibility pathways and we are discussing proposing a sixth pathway.

Conclusion

Instead of creating a separate certification pathway through legislation, Maine should continue to refine its industrial arts and CTE teacher certification standards through the ongoing Chapter 115 review process. A strong, unified system ensures that all educators—regardless of subject area—meet high standards that prioritize student success. LD 1163, while well-intentioned, would introduce inconsistencies, lower certification standards, and ultimately weaken the quality of education in Maine schools.

I would be pleased to address your questions.

Thank you.