



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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April 25, 2025 - Testimony in support of LD 1357:

“An Act to Create Alternative Pathways for Certification or Endorsement of Industrial Arts Teachers.”

Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham, and I serve as the House Republican Leader. I represent House District 12, which includes Franklin, Gouldsboro, Hancock, Sorrento, Sullivan, Winter Harbor, and Steuben. I’m here today to testify in strong support of ***LD 1357 – “An Act to Create Alternative Pathways for Certification or Endorsement of Industrial Arts Teachers.”***

This legislation responds to a growing and urgent challenge: Maine is facing a critical shortage of qualified industrial arts and career and technical education (CTE) teachers. This workforce gap is not just a matter of staffing, it directly impacts our ability to prepare students with the hands-on, job-ready skills that are essential in today’s economy.

LD 1357 offers a practical, common-sense solution. It would establish a clear and rigorous alternative certification pathway for experienced tradespeople to become industrial arts educators, without requiring them to follow the traditional certification route designed primarily for academic educators.

Here’s the reality:

- Interest and demand in CTE programs are rising among Maine students.
- Our current teaching workforce is aging, with many CTE instructors nearing retirement.
- Skilled tradespeople are often deterred from entering the classroom by lower wages and complex certification hurdles.

While we may not be able to solve wage disparities overnight, we can address the overly burdensome certification requirements that are keeping qualified professionals out of our schools.

LD 1357 directs the State Board of Education to create an experience-based certification pathway. To qualify, candidates must meet robust requirements, including:

- Completion of a registered apprenticeship,
- A technical degree or certificate from an accredited institution, and
- At least 36 months of paid work or teaching experience, including supervisory experience.

These criteria reflect real-world competence, leadership, and industry relevance, and ensure that students are learning from professionals who know their craft inside and out.

By passing this bill, Maine can better align education with our workforce needs. Employers across the state consistently report challenges in hiring trained workers in the trades. Many of us have experienced firsthand how hard it can be to find a skilled electrician, welder, or carpenter when we need one.

LD 1357 breaks down unnecessary technical barriers, opens the door for more Mainers to enter the teaching profession, and helps us build a more responsive and qualified education system for our students.

In closing, this bill is about unlocking potential for students, for trades professionals, and for Maine's economy. It upholds high standards while introducing flexibility, and it offers a modern, meaningful pathway for those who have already built successful careers in the trades.

I respectfully urge the committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1357. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Billy Bob Faulkingham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham
House Republican Leader