

Lucille Willey, Director, Coastal Washington County Institute of Technology (CWCIT)

**In support of LD 972 An Act to Change the Entity Responsible for Operating the Career and Technical Education Center in Machias to Regional School Unit 37**

Good morning. My name is Lucille Willey, and I am the Director of the Coastal Washington County Institute of Technology. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of LD 972.

CWCIT is a small Career and Technical Education Center in western Washington County. In Maine, CTE schools are structured as either Centers or Regions. Regions are independent units governed by a cooperative board. Centers, like ours, are governed by a single school administrative unit—typically where the programs are housed.

Our situation is unique. Although CWCIT is governed by Machias, most of our programs, students, staff, and facilities are in RSU 37. In 2019, RSU 37, Machias, and partner districts wrote a grant to start 4 new programs within CWCIT. The grant was awarded, and then the committee had to agree on a building to house the new programs. RSU 37 purchased a building within its parameters and the 4 new programs started up in the fall of 2021 in the building purchased by RSU 27, in addition to the 2 that were already in existence in Machias and 1 existing program at Jonesport-Beals. Since then, the RSU 37 building has been renovated to accommodate seven programs, with plans for more. Yet, the Center's governance remains with Machias.

This mismatch causes daily administrative complications. For example, RSU 37 hires and supervises most of the staff, but Machias is listed as their employer in state systems. So, for staff certification or payroll issues, RSU 37 must go through Machias—adding unnecessary steps.

We've lost significant opportunities because of this confusion. In 2022, we were automatically disqualified from a \$480,000 infrastructure grant because the RSU 37 superintendent—who oversees the actual building—signed the application, instead of the Machias superintendent. We also lost out on a Perkins-funded van due to disagreements over ownership, insurance, and where it would be housed.

Simple decisions—like setting calendars, approving stipends, or clarifying student policies—require approval from both RSU 37 and Machias, and sometimes even Machias town officials. It's inefficient and delays progress.

LD 972 would resolve this by aligning CWCIT governance with where the majority of our operations occur—in RSU 37. Machias and Jonesport-Beals programs would become satellites. This change would streamline operations, reduce confusion, and better serve our students.

CWCIT went through a Comprehensive School Review during the 23-24 school year. The final report describes many of the complications that I have just talked about. Then it states “This unusual structure has created confusion within the CTE's operations and within the development of its schoolwide cultural identity. It is recommended that a legislative change be considered that would assign CWCIT to RSU 37.” And then under the recommendations, it is recommended by this committee, of which Dwight Littlefield, State CTE Director, was a member, that we consider restructuring the governance of CWCIT to reflect legislative intention, and work toward a legislative change that will reflect the current operational structure.

Thank you for your time and your support for Career and Technical Education in Maine.