

Testimony in support of LD1764- An Act to Ensure Equitable Staffing Ratios Across the State for Career and Technical Education Programs in Areas with Smaller Student Populations. Submitted to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Stanley Sluzenski and I am the director of St. Croix Regional Technical Center in Calais. St. Croix Tech serves the three high schools from Calais, Baileyville, and Eastport. All of our schools are located on the border of Maine resulting in a catchment area with just under 500 students in grades 9-12. St. Croix Tech is one of the smallest CTE schools based on population but we cover a geographical area as large as most other CTEs in the state.

I give you this data about St. Croix Tech to highlight the difference from the larger CTEs. Some of the urban CTE schools have a high school population over seven times larger than St. Croix Tech. This illustrates what we all know about Maine, that it is a state with an assortment of various regions, from urban to rural.

The current CTE funding formula was created and put into use only seven years ago. It treats all CTE schools the same regardless of student population. There are many parts of the funding formula that function well in its standardized form. However, one piece of the formula, the student-to-teacher ratio needs to be revised. The current ratio of 13 to 1 will fund a program with a full-time teacher if the benchmark is met. The number of students used in the formula is based on the average number of students enrolled in the program for the three previous years.

These numbers make sense with a medium to large student population. For example, if a program normally has 24 students but then has an off year with only 12, the three-year average will be 20 ( $24+24+12=60/3 \text{ years}=20$ ). The dip can be absorbed and the program will still be funded for a full-time teacher. In a small school, a program may typically have 14 students per year. If this program has an off year with only 8 students, the three-year average drops below 13 ( $14+14+8=36/3 \text{ years}=12$ ). Even if this program bounces back to 14 students the next year, the year with 8 students will keep the average below 13 for two more budget cycles. One dip in enrollment can cut reduce funding to a half-time teacher for three years.

St. Croix Tech is in this situation where several of our programs are below the 13 student benchmark. Our budget allocation from FY25 to FY26 has actually decreased by about \$5,000, which creates a challenge for us as salaries, benefits, and supplies continue to increase. Adjusting the student-to-teacher ratio for small population CTE schools to 8 to 1, as proposed in LD1764, will have a huge impact that enables us to maintain the quality programs offered at St. Croix Tech and I urge you to vote ought-to-pass.

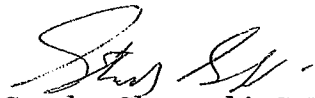
There are ten programs offered at St. Croix Tech: Automotive Technology, Business, Carpentry, C.N.A., Computer Technology, Criminal Justice, Culinary Arts, Early

Childhood Education, Welding, and CTE Exploratory. This covers a wide range of career clusters and many career pathways. Six of our programs are above the benchmark while four have dipped below 13 to 1. Without funding for full-time teachers we will be forced to cut programs to half-time or eliminate them entirely. Half-time programs are not sustainable as teachers need full-time employment. Eliminating programs does not properly serve our students. To put it frankly, not every student is going to work at the mill or the hospital. Our students deserve, and our workforce needs demand, that we provide opportunities in a broad range of career clusters.

I will end with a personal story. I was first hired as the Carpentry teacher at St. Croix Tech in 1999. This was a half-time position and I was replacing the previous half-time teacher who left to take a full-time position at another school. I was 32 years old when I got the calling to teach, with a small business and a young family. Fortunately, the position moved to full-time within two years. I can honestly say that I would not have stayed at St. Croix Tech for many more years in the part-time position. Now that I am the school director, I feel very strongly about maintaining my teachers in full-time programs so they can all have rewarding careers in support of our students.

Once again, I urge you to vote ought-to-pass on LD1764.

Thank you for your time and attention.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stan Sluzenski".

Stanley Sluzenski, CTE Director

St. Croix Regional Technical Center, Calais



# 132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

## FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2025

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**Legislative Document**

**No. 1764**

H.P. 1183

House of Representatives, April 23, 2025

**An Act to Ensure Equitable Staffing Ratios Across the State for  
Career and Technical Education Programs in Areas with Smaller  
Student Populations**

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Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT  
Clerk

Presented by Speaker FECTEAU of Biddeford.  
Cosponsored by Senator RAFFERTY of York and  
Representatives: ALBERT of Madawaska, CLUCHEY of Bowdoinham, FARRIN of Jefferson,  
MCCABE of Lewiston, STROUT of Harrington, WEBB of Durham, WOODSOME of  
Waterboro.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §8309** is enacted to read:

**§8309. Staffing ratios; funding distribution**

**1. Staffing ratios.** A center or region shall maintain a minimum staffing ratio as follows:

A. At least one full-time employee for every 8 students enrolled for a center or region with fewer than 1,000 students; and

**B. At least one full-time employee for every 13 students enrolled for a center or region with 1,000 or more students.**

Notwithstanding the requirements of paragraphs A and B, a center or region may adopt a staffing ratio appropriate to the industry standard applicable to the program offered by the center or region, subject to the approval of the commissioner.

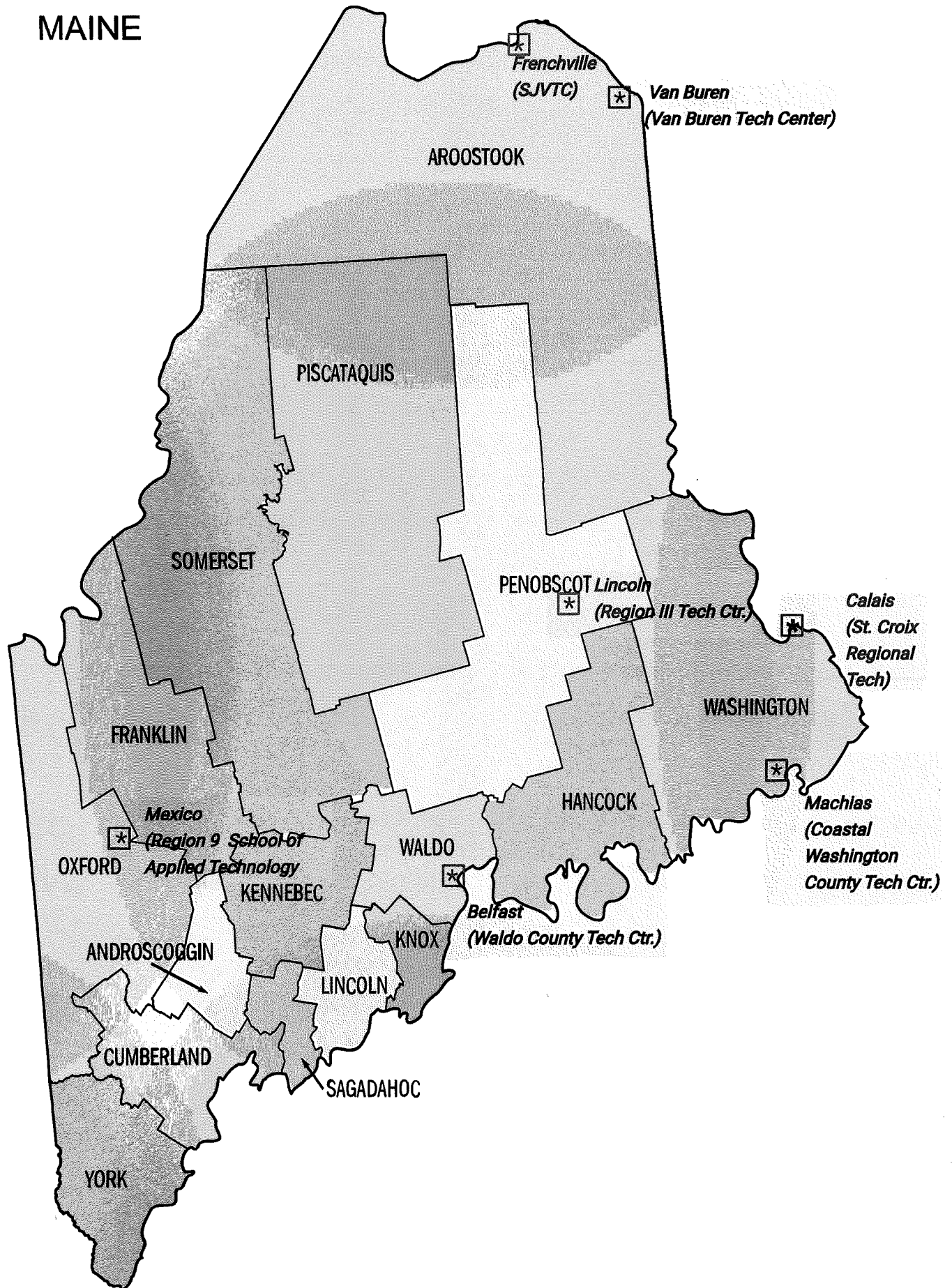
**2. Funding distribution.** Beginning in 2025, a center or region shall submit to the department annually by September 30th a calculation of the difference between the funding needed for the center or region to meet the staffing ratio requirements under subsection 1 and the funding received by the center or region for the previous fiscal year.

Beginning in 2025, the department shall distribute additional available funds to a center or region by November 30th annually to meet the staffing requirements under subsection 1 based on the annual calculation submitted by that center or region, giving preference for funding distribution to a center or region with fewer than 1,000 students.

## SUMMARY

This bill requires a career and technical education center or region to maintain a certain staffing ratio based on the number of students enrolled at the center or region. The bill allows a center or region to adopt a staffing ratio appropriate to the industry standard applicable to the program offered by the center or region, subject to the approval of the Commissioner of Education. The bill also requires a center or region to submit to the Department of Education an annual calculation of the difference between the funding needed to meet the staffing ratio requirements and the funding the center or region received for the previous fiscal year. The bill requires the department to distribute additional available funds to a center or region by November 30th annually to meet the staffing requirements based on the annual calculation submitted by that center or region, giving preference for funding distribution to a center or region with fewer than 1,000 students.

# MAINE



This bill addresses CTE programming in smaller Maine CTEs by:

1. Enables smaller Maine CTEs to provide critical business/industry training as most Maine CTEs perform in larger Maine communities.
2. Addresses the Maine CTE EPS funding program enrollment ratio from 13:1 to 8:1 when the Maine CTE Center/Region catchment area  
Is below 1000 students
3. Achieves equality for all Maine secondary students access to Career & Technology Education training no matter where you live in Maine
4. Addresses the ability for a smaller Maine CTE Center/Region to maintain a "Full Time Equivalent" when the instructor/student ratio falls below 13:1 creating a hardship for Maine CTEs to keep their programs active.
5. Addresses an industry ratio challenge for Maine CTE programs as: Forestry, Commercial Drivers License, Certified Nursing Assistant programs, when industry standards restricts Instructor-student ratios due to industry safety restrictions.

Kevin Lavoie, Curt Ring, Travis Wood, Stan Sluzenski will all be present for the public hearing Tuesday. Kevin Lavoie will deliver MACTE testimony.

Kevin Lavoie

Director, St. John Valley Technology Center

In Support of **LD1764 – “The Ratio Bill” (previously LD1942 of last legislative year)**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

May 6, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan & Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Kevin Lavoie, and I proudly serve as the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Director at St. John Valley Technology Center (SJVTC) in Frenchville, Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in strong support of **LD1764 – “The Ratio Bill.”**

SJVTC is nestled in the heart of the St. John River Valley, within the Crown of Aroostook County. Our center serves a catchment of 468 students in grades 9–12, drawn from three local high schools: SAD #27 – Fort Kent Community High School, Madawaska Schools, and MSAD #33 – Wisdom Middle/High School in St. Agatha.

Despite this respectable catchment number, only about half of those students are realistically eligible for CTE participation. This is due to the scheduling demands and core graduation requirements that dominate the lower high school grades, delaying access to CTE until later years. As a result, our actual enrollment in CTE programs is significantly lower than the total catchment suggests—a challenge shared by many rural CTE centers across the state.

SJVTC proudly offers 12 full CTE programs plus an Applied Technical Math program. However, under the current statute, programs that do not meet a three-year rolling average of 13 students see their subsidy reduced dramatically—cutting instructor salary and benefit reimbursement to 50%, with the rest falling to the local share. For SJVTC, this formula has created a projected \$196,000 shortfall in FY ‘25/’26 under the current ED279.

This shortfall is not due to lack of effort or student interest—it is due to rural constraints, population density, and inflexible funding formulas that disproportionately affect smaller centers like ours. We are located in a geographically isolated and economically depressed region, where the need for workforce development is urgent. Yet we are asked to operate under funding conditions better suited to more densely populated, urban areas.

The reduction of subsidy due to current legislation coupled with the lack of fiscal capacity within the rural communities to provide the stop gap equates to reduction in workforce from full-time to part-time capacity. This customarily derides departures from education as no one will work as a part-time teacher to sustain a family. No teachers equate to no programs, no programs mean no workforce development for our businesses within our economic region which in turn affects the states overall economy.

LD1764 offers a real, actionable solution. By adjusting the program subsidy threshold from 13 to 8 for CTE centers with a catchment area of fewer than 1,000 eligible students, the bill levels the playing field. It provides centers like SJVTC—and others such as Van Buren CTE, St. Croix Regional Technical Center in Calais, Coastal Washington County Tech Center in Machias, Region III in Lincoln, Region 9 in Mexico, and Waldo County Tech in Belfast—with a chance to sustain critical programming and offer students meaningful, career-building opportunities.

Without this adjustment, the current model threatens the survival of rural CTE programs and, by extension, the future of students who depend on local access to education in skilled trades, applied technologies, and workforce readiness. These are not just classroom experiences—they are pipelines to jobs, community growth, and economic stability for the state of Maine.

**LD1764** is not a handout—it is a recalibration. It reflects the realities of rural education and ensures that all Maine students—no matter their ZIP code—have a fair shot at building a skilled, meaningful future.

**I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of LD1764.** I would also like to yield the floor to several of my CTE colleagues, who will share how this bill would benefit their students and missions across other small centers in our state.

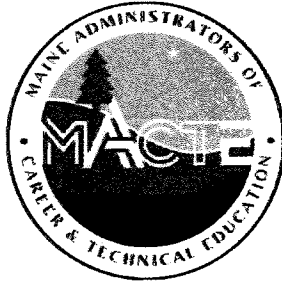
Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to educational equity and workforce development in Maine. I would invite my colleagues who are similarly situated to address you today in support of LD1764.

Respectfully,

Kevin Lavoie  
Director, St. John Valley Technology Center  
Frenchville, ME



**TESTIMONY REGARDING  
LD 1764**



Maine Administrators of  
Career and Technical  
Education  
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Paulette Bonneau  
Rob Callahan  
Ralph Conroy  
Nicholas Gannon  
Kevin Lavoie  
Brian Leavitt  
Travis Wood  
mainecte.org  
*MACTE's mission is to  
lead and advocate for  
CTE in Maine.*

**An Act to Ensure Equitable Staffing Ratios Across the State for  
Career and Technical Education Programs in Areas with Smaller  
Student Populations**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Kevin Lavoie, St. John Valley Career & Technical Education Director, testifying on behalf of the CTE Directors of the Maine Administrators of Career & Technical Education (MACTE). MACTE would like to address LD 1764 as we are in support of this bill.

This bill allows schools with fewer than 1,000 students to have one full-time instructor for career and technical education for every 8 students and schools with 1,000 or more students to have one full-time instructor for career and technical education for every 13 students or a ratio appropriate to the industry standard for the career field that is the program of the career and technical education.

CTE Directors are encouraged by this bill as it would enable smaller Maine CTEs the stability of maintaining full time CTE programs even if their enrollment numbers slips below 13:1 ratio. For smaller CTEs that have a catchment area of smaller high schools, a 13:1 for smaller CTEs was identified as a CTE barrier in the recent LD 313 report provided to this committee by the Maine Department of Education.

This ratio is very challenging for particular programs such as:

1. Certified Nursing Programs. Especially in the clinical setting
2. Commercial Driving Licensing programs
3. Forestry Programs

The bill requires the department to distribute additional available funds to a center or region by November 30th annually to meet the staffing requirements based on the annual calculation submitted by that center or region, giving preference for funding distribution to a center or region with fewer than 1,000 students.

Yours in education,

**Testimony in Support of LD 1764**  
**An Act Related to Career and Technical Education Teacher Certification**  
**Submitted to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**  
**132nd Maine Legislature**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Maine Association of Career and Technical Education Administrators (MACTE), I write to express my support for LD 1764 and to urge the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass."

Career and Technical Education (CTE) is a proven driver of student success and economic opportunity. Across Maine, CTE programs deliver high-quality, hands-on education that engages students, connects them to meaningful careers, and strengthens our state's workforce. These programs not only contribute to improved graduation rates and post-secondary outcomes but also ensure that students leave high school with valuable skills and credentials sought after in today's Maine economy.

Skilled and experienced teachers are the backbone of this success. LD 1764 addresses critical barriers to CTE teacher recruitment and retention by recognizing the value of professional experience, supporting pathways for industry experts to enter the classroom, and ensuring our students have access to the high-quality instruction they deserve. In an era where many sectors are struggling to find qualified workers, it is essential that Maine support the educators who prepare our next generation of skilled professionals.

The demand for skilled labor is urgent and statewide. From health care to construction, information technology to precision manufacturing, Maine's economy depends on a workforce ready to meet the needs of today and tomorrow. CTE is central to this effort—and LD 1764 is a necessary tool to strengthen that pipeline.

MACTE views LD 1764 as a key workforce development initiative. Our students need access to impactful, industry-aligned programs, and those programs depend on having the right teachers in the right classrooms. We respectfully urge the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1764 and help advance Maine's economic future through strong, accessible, and high-quality Career and Technical Education.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Maine's students, schools, and workforce.

Sincerely,  
Rob Callahan

Director - Lewiston Regional Technical Center  
Member of the Maine Association of Career and Technical Education Administrators (MACTE)

As Director of the Coastal Washington County Institute of Technology, I am reaching out to you to ask for your support regarding LD1764 (An Act to Ensure Equitable Staffing Ratios Across the State for Career and Technical Education Programs in Areas with Smaller Student Populations)

This legislation would allow Career and Technical schools such as ours, with a catchment area of fewer than 1,000 students to have one full-time employee (instructor) for every 8 students instead of the current 13 to 1 ratio, which is very difficult in the rural areas of Maine.

Our catchment area includes the four high schools in Western Washington County; Washington Academy, with a 9-12 enrollment of 264, Narraguagus High School with a 9-12 enrollment of 194, Machias Memorial High School with a 9-12 enrollment of 173, and Jonesport-Beals High School with a 9-12 enrollment of 59. The total enrollment of our catchment area is 690 students. However, of the 690 students, except in rare situations, we only serve the 11th and 12th graders due to conflicts with graduation requirements for the sending schools. Our high schools are small and flexibility with scheduling is difficult. That is true, even with the 11th and 12th graders, but becomes even more difficult if we include 9th and 10th graders in our CTE programming. Also, Washington Academy, which has the largest enrollment of any of our sending schools, typically has fewer than a dozen students (less than 8%) included in our total enrollment, more than likely due to the fact that WA is a private secondary school. So, the largest school in our catchment area, sends the fewest number of students.

CWCIT has 11 programs. Of the 11, one (Computer Science) was new in 24-25, so received FTE status, but only had 5 students. That figure may not grow a lot beyond that, but is a very valuable educational experience for the students who are taking it. Five of our programs are over the 13 to 1 ratio. One (Childcare) is at 12, but still receiving .5 FTE. All of the other programs, however, are at the 8 to 1 ratio. These enrollments are not likely to grow due to the small enrollment in the catchment area. We are very close to maximum enrollment from the sending schools. The three smallest sending schools send us well over 60% of their 11th and 12th graders and that figure may change from year to year, but is not likely to go consistently more than 3 out of 5 of their 11th and 12th graders.

If the LD 1764 were to pass, Coastal Washington County Institute of Technology, serving well over half of Washington County students, could be funded fully with all 11 of our programs. It could also give us a chance to expand offerings and provide more opportunities for students as well as economic growth in Western Washington County. .

Curt Ring  
Director, Northern Penobscot Tech Region 3  
In Support of LD1764  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
May 6, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan & Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Curt Ring, and I am the Director of Northern Penobscot Tech Region 3, a CTE school located in Lincoln, Maine. I am here in support of LD1764, also referred to as the "Ratio Bill."

NPT Region 3 currently has 12 programs: Automotive Technology, Business Management, Carpentry, Culinary Arts, Digital Communications, Early Childhood Education, Law Enforcement, Medical Office Technology, Outdoor Leadership, Registered Medical Assistant, CTE Exploratory and Welding. Beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, we will add Firefighting to our program of studies.

Our school enrolls students from five area high schools: Stearns High School, Schenck High School, Lee Academy, Mattanawcook Academy and Penobscot Valley High School. The combined 9-12 enrollment at these five schools is 786 students. Due to declining population in our catchment area, enrollment in some of our programs falls below the required minimum of 13 students on a rolling three-year average in order to qualify for full funding from the Department of Education. When that happens, difficult decisions must be made. Teaching positions must be reduced to half-time, or programs must be eliminated. Either decision has an adverse effect on regional students. Scheduling constraints in our sending high schools often limit the ability for students to enroll in a program that is restricted to half-time. Eliminating programs simply doesn't allow students to enroll in the program of their choice.

With the opportunity to receive full funding for low-enrolled programs, small CTE schools will be able to employ full-time instructors and provide trade and workplace-based education to all students who wish to attend our schools.

I respectfully ask this Committee to vote in favor of LD1764. With your support, we will continue to provide a high-quality education to CTE students in the trades, technology, public safety, medical and service industries.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Curt Ring  
Director, Northern Penobscot Tech Region 3

## **Testimony for LD 1764 – “The Ratio Bill”**

*An Act to Ensure Equity in Career and Technical Education Staffing Support Ratios Across Varied Regions of the State*

### **Presented by:**

Travis Wood

Director, Waldo County Technical Center (WCTC) - Region 7

May 4, 2025

Good afternoon, esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Travis Wood, and I am the Director at Waldo County Technical Center-Region 7, in Waldo, Maine. I am here to express my strong support for LD 1764, “The Ratio Bill,” which seeks to establish equitable staffing support ratios for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs across Maine.

Maine’s CTE programs are pivotal in preparing students for successful careers in various industries. However, disparities in staffing ratios between schools with fewer than 1,000 students and those with 1,000 or more students have led to inequities in the quality of education and support provided to students. LD 1764 proposes:

- **For schools with fewer than 1,000 students:** One full-time CTE staff member per 8 students.
- **For schools with 1,000 or more students:** One full-time CTE staff member per 13 students or a ratio appropriate to the industry standard for the vocational field.

This legislation ensures that all students, regardless of their school's size, have access to high-quality CTE programs with adequate support. With this legislation, WCTC and centers like ours could assess sending schools even less than we do now. If I have completed my math correctly, this could result in around \$40,000 in funding for programs receiving a half FTE if it is moved to full FTE.

The Maine State Nurses Association has been a vocal advocate for safe staffing ratios in healthcare settings, emphasizing the importance of adequate staffing to ensure patient safety and quality care. While their focus has been on healthcare, their advocacy underscores the broader principle that appropriate staffing levels are essential for quality outcomes in any field, including education.

In conclusion, LD 1764 ensures all Maine students have equal access to high-quality Career and Technical Education. We can help students thrive in their chosen vocational paths by establishing equitable staffing ratios. I urge the committee to support this bill and work towards its swift enactment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.