

TESTIMONY

In support of

LD 680: Resolve, To Reestablish the Task Force To Study the Creation of a Comprehensive Career and Technical Education System

And

LD 516: Resolve, Directing the Department of Education To Review Career and Technical Education Courses and Provide Guidance on High School Credit Equivalencies

March 17, 2021

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan and other esteemed members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Daniel Allen, and I am the Instruction and Professional Development director for the Maine Education Association (MEA) which represents 24,000 teachers, education support professionals, and retired educators across Maine.

I am here to testify in support of LD 680 and LD 516, resolves that if passed could lead to greater access to Career and Technical Education programs for Maine students and a more efficient and effective way for those students to obtain the credits they need to graduate Maine high schools. The underlying problem that these two resolves address is that CTE students can find it very difficult to get the credits they need in courses like English, history, math, and others which are not offered in the CTE program.

The MEA encourages greater support for Maine's Career and Technical Education programs and believes that the creation of the task force called for in LD 680 and the analysis of the programs called for in LD 516, are necessary.

As a former teacher at Buckfield Jr.-Sr. High School, I know from personal experience that CTE students face severe hurdles in trying to meet graduation requirements while attending the Region 11 Career and Technical Education Center. Some of those hurdles are logistical. Travel time for students to the center is approximately 35 minutes, one way. This interferes with their ability to participate fully in courses at BHS, potentially leading to poor grades and sometimes prevents them from accessing some courses at all because of scheduling conflicts.

Some workarounds were successful, including giving students credit for courses or specific course content if they could demonstrate proficiency in that area. But this was a piecemeal approach, and the result was that some students who would have benefited from taking CTE courses chose not to attend Region 11.

I recently spoke with Supt. Richard Colpitts at Oxford Hills Regional School District which hosts the CTE program. The same issues remain and not just for the students from BHS. Despite being onsite and not needing to

travel, Oxford Hills students also have difficulty earning the credits they need to graduate as a result of scheduling conflicts and the difficulty of demonstrating mastery of traditional course work through the CTE program.

The need for technical training is apparent, as is the desire for the courses on the part of students. Maine must get this figured out if we are going to be able to offer our students the opportunity they need to acquire career skills that will prepare them to enter industries that are currently struggling to find qualified workers. The Legislature can improve our students' chances for success by passing these resolves.

MEA does not know exactly what should be done to fix this problem and it appears that a decade of honest attempts by school districts has not produced a satisfactory solution. We believe Maine needs the task force called for in LD 680 and the study called for in LD 680.

For these reasons, the MEA recommends the committee vote "ought to pass" on both LD 680 and LD 516.