



The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Jason Judd, Executive Director, Educate Maine

In Support Of

L.D. # 680

March 17, 2021

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan, distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Jason Judd, Executive Director at Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of L.D. #680.

Educate Maine's mission is to ensure that Maine people are prepared to succeed in education and career and that all Maine people reach their highest educational potential. As a member of the MaineSpark coalition, we measure this by attainment - the share of adult workers with a postsecondary credential of value in demand by Maine employers. Maine's goal is to reach 60% by 2025.

Supporting students, teachers, and staff within career and technical centers and regions in Maine has been an integral part of our work for many years. We believe in expanding CTE opportunities for students because we know from students, families, teachers, and administrators how integral career and technical education is for preparing students to enter postsecondary education and the workforce in our state. In 2017, we were one of the organizations who vocally supported doubling the number of Maine students with CTE experiences. Since then, we have worked closely with MACTE, the State Board of Education, and the MELMAC Education Foundation to grow CTE opportunities in Maine, scale innovative promising practices across regions and centers, and reduce systemic challenges that limit student CTE opportunities.

The data on the positive impacts of career and technical education programs is clear. Students in CTE have a lower chance of dropping out and a higher chance of graduating on time. High school graduates with CTE credits are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education than their peers. CTE programs are high quality; the programs are required to offer robust and industry-driven curriculum which responds to the needs of the local community both within traditional trade areas and a variety of other industries like cybersecurity, hospitality, and healthcare. CTE students participate in programs with dual enrollment opportunities where they graduate high school with college credits and advanced standing at many colleges across Maine. Students gain marketable industry credentials while they are in CTE programs. In a 2019

survey to CTE directors, more than 4000 skilled trade certificates were earned by Maine CTE students just in that year. CTE students enter high demand industries and quickly become part of the workforce often earning high starting wages based on their coursework and experiences which began in CTE centers and regions. CTE programs are essential to meet the workforce challenges of our state.

Although CTE programming for 9th and 10th graders has grown in Maine over the past several years, we must continue to innovate to connect our youngest high school students with high quality CTE opportunities. Too many 9th graders and 10th graders cannot access CTE opportunities based on systemic barriers including scheduling, transportation, and regional priorities. This bill will create a comprehensive task force to work together to better understand how new CTE models might address some of the persisting barriers that have often prevented students to participate in CTE experiences. Could a 4-year comprehensive CTE school be a strong model to examine in Maine? Could we learn from the success of other states who have developed robust 4-year CTE schools to address both student needs and the needs of local communities? We need to examine these models in Maine in collaboration with our CTE directors, policymakers, school leaders, industry representatives, and others as suggested in the bill.

I encourage you to support LD 680. Maine students need a variety of pathways to thrive in our education system, and this bill supports a highly collaborative process to explore a new model to support our students. Thank you for your time.

Jason Judd
Educate Maine