



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

In Support Of

L.D. # 144

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. #144.

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.

Maine's career and technical education centers and regions need our help. This bill will provide much needed funding for capital improvements. The funding will increase student safety, address equipment shortages to serve more students, and upgrade outdated equipment to better prepare students for success in postsecondary education and in the workforce.

I strongly encourage you to support this bill for the following reasons:

CTE Programs are essential to grow our skilled workforce.

Students graduating from career and technical education programs often help address the significant workforce shortages across our state. We constantly hear from employers about the need for additional skilled workers. It is our responsibility to make sure young people graduate from high school and are able to transition into the workforce or postsecondary education successfully. In order to thrive in the workforce, students need to be exposed to the equipment used in industry within their CTE programs. The CTE regions and centers actively engage with local employers through their industry advisory boards to make sure the curriculum is relevant and meets the needs of the workforce. Despite this cooperation with employers, CTE centers and regions are often constrained by financial resources in order to respond to the needs of their communities. This bill will help address this barrier allowing CTE centers and regions to invest in capital improvements which are essential to prepare students for the workforce.

CTE Regions and Centers operate on very limited financial resources.

I work closely with a variety of CTE Directors. They are some of the most creative leaders I know who are able to stretch budgets, build partnerships, and engage the community to support their programs. CTE programs have been dependent on industry partners to donate equipment and space in order to meet the needs of their students. Many states use Perkins funding to help support CTE capital improvements over time. In Maine, this funding is split in half between the CTE programs and the Maine Community College System which often leaves each CTE region and center with very little funding each year to make appropriate investments compared to their peers in other states.

Funding for capital improvements can help close opportunity gaps for students.

Although CTE programs have shown to increase graduation rates, decrease dropout rates, and maximize early college opportunities, we know that some Maine students are not able to access these high-quality programs. Since CTE programs offer hands-on instruction using tools and equipment to prepare students for the workforce, some centers and regions have to limit their enrollment based on the equipment that is available. We often hear from school counselors that they only have a few spots for students to attend particular programs. CTE centers and regions often have lengthy waitlists for essential programs in healthcare, plumbing, construction, and electrical. This bill will help address the lack of equipment, ensure safe spaces for students to learn, and potentially expand programs to serve more students.

Our career and technical education centers and regions need our support. We need to invest in them to help address the needs of our students. Thank you for your time.

Jason Judd
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