



Testimony in support of LD 414, *An Act to Create Parity Between Private Schools and Public Schools Regarding Career and Technical Education Tuition Rates*

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Sen. Daughtry, Rep. Brennan, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Rene Menard, Headmaster of Thornton Academy. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 414.

Maine's independent schools educate thousands of publicly funded students across the state. The majority of these students rely on independent schools or "town academies" because their hometown may not operate its own public high school. Towns that send students to these academies pay a per-pupil tuition rate established by the Maine DOE.

Students that attend our schools have access to courses at State-funded regional CTEs (Career and Technical Education Centers). Administrators, teachers, and counselors spend much time and effort counseling students, building unique course schedules, providing remediation when necessary, and make staffing adjustments that may not be the most efficient use of resources, to accommodate and enable students to access CTE opportunities.

The results of our efforts – if we are successful in preparing and convincing a student to try a course at a CTE – is a 1/3 reduction in the tuition we receive from the sending towns for every student that accesses a CTE.

This reduction in tuition, mandated by Title 20-A, section 5809, creates a disincentive for our schools to promote and make CTE education available to thousands of Maine high school students. We believe section 5809 conflicts with the goals of the DOE and Maine business and industry leaders who wish to promote the value of CTEs.

LD 414 repeals section 5809 and the financial penalty on town academies that promote and encourage CTE education. Any associated costs that a town might incur for a student attending a CTE are the same regardless of the type of high school that student attends. There are no additional costs for any community when a town academy sends a student to a CTE and no justification for a 1/3 reduction in tuition.

Section 5809 is not only unfair, but in direct contrast to how the State funds public education. The State makes no distinction between students from town academies and public-school students when they provide the funding for CTEs. Furthermore, the State does not consider the number of public-school students that attend a CTE when

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determining and distributing State subsidy to a public school district. Unlike the loss of tuition incurred by town academies under section 5809, there is no loss or reduction in state subsidy when a public school sends a student to a CTE.

LD 414 does not seek any money from the State. Nor does it seek additional funds from our communities beyond the tuition rate that the Department of Education has set for our students that don't attend a CTE.

Districts budget their tuition payments to our schools based upon the total number of students enrolled. If students enroll in a CTE in September, months after the local budget is approved, those public districts receive an unexpected refund at the expense of the town academy that is often serving as the public school for that community.

This "refund" - with no associated CTE expense - is only available to the select districts that send students to tuition receiving schools, primarily town academies. The overwhelming majority of public-school districts and taxpayers across the state do not receive a discount or a refund when they send a student to a CTE.

Section 5809 offers no financial support to CTEs. It undermines efforts to promote CTE education. It creates inequity between independent and public schools, and inequity among public school districts and taxpayers across the state. I urge to you to repeal section 5809 by supporting LD 414.

Thank you.

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