

TO: Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

FROM: Jeremy Ray, Superintendent of Biddeford and Dayton Schools

DATE: March 17, 2021

RE: OPPOSITION TO LD 414

As Superintendent of Schools for the Biddeford and Dayton School Departments, I am in a unique position to **testify against LD 414**. Within my purview as superintendent for two school districts, I am responsible for a vocational center in Biddeford and also tuition students to a town academy in Dayton. LD 414 does not benefit the vocational schools and, in fact, would have a significant negative tax impact on municipalities that tuition students.

The statutory provision in Title 20-A 5809 was changed in 2017 to limit town academies and public high schools from charging more than 2/3 tuition for students who attend a vocational center. The rationale was that Maine State taxpayers were already funding vocational education at the state-wide level, thus decreasing the need for local tax dollars. Before 2017, the 1/3 tuition was directed by statute to go to the vocational center or region to help off-set costs. If any change is made--in which I am not advocating--Maine should revert to the prior system of sending 1/3 of the tuition to vocational school for capital repairs or equipment upgrades.

If LD 414 is enacted into law, smaller communities like Dayton and Arundel, who send students to the Biddeford Regional Center of Technology and tuition students to either a public high school or town academy, will see large increases in their community's budget. The impact for the community of Dayton will be more than **.26 cents** to the mill rate. This would not only be an extreme challenge for a small community with limited ability to raise taxes, but it will be during a time when the budget has already been developed.

Additionally, with the current EPS funding formula model for vocational centers and regions, the amount of state subsidy received is less than what is needed to fund the vocational centers fully. In a situation like ours in Biddeford, the Biddeford taxpayers are currently funding all expenses and capital improvements above and beyond the cost of state subsidy. This 1 /3 tuition reduction allows for our communities to have greater conversations about a local funding option that will spread the additional local costs even amongst the communities based on student count. I am concerned that if LD 414 is enacted, those local host communities will continue to be the sole funders of vocational education along with the taxpayers of the State of Maine.