



Manufacturers Association of Maine

**Testimony of
Jessica L. Laliberte
On Behalf Manufacturers Association of Maine
In Support of**

LD 313 An Act To Advance Career and Technical Education Opportunities in Maine

April 9, 2021

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Jessica L. Laliberte, and I am the policy relations manager for the Manufacturers Association of Maine, a non-partisan, pro-growth, pro-manufacturing industry organization representing hundreds of manufacturing businesses in our state and the thousands of employees they employ.

We are happy to offer our comments in support of ***LD 313 An Act To Advance Career and Technical Education Opportunities in Maine.***

Manufacturing in Maine plays a vital role in the United States and globally. Our industry employs nearly 55,000 people and accounts for 12% of all wages paid in the state. We are struggling. Our workers are aging out and there are few waiting to fill job openings in 1600 manufacturing companies across Maine. Today there are roughly 4,000 open positions in various manufacturing sectors from wood composite, biotech, boat building, metal, paper and food and beverage manufacturing to name a few. These are good paying jobs- the average salary is \$58,000 a year. We are facing a workforce crisis. And we need help now!

LD 313 tackles the workforce challenge in many ways. First, this proposal seeks to expose more students to Career and Technical Education programming by allowing freshman and sophomore to experience various CTE classes. We believe increased access and exposure to CTE classes will lead to more students enrolling in CTE.

The bill seeks to create a career and technical education business roundtable, where interested employers would identify their workforce needs now and, in the future, including required skill sets, ensuring that the State's career and technical education programs fit business needs and providing partners in on-the-job training. This is something our Association strongly supports and wants to be a part of.

**33 McAlister Farm Road
Portland, ME 04103
207-747-4406
info@mainemfg.com
www.mainemfg.com**

“The Manufacturers Association of Maine is dedicated to promoting and growing manufacturing.”

Additionally, LD 313 would remove barriers from skilled industry professionals desiring to teach in CTE programs but are kept away because of certification requirements. Industry certification is the gold standard. Alternative certification requirements would always help address the shortage in CTE staffing.

This bill creates multiple pathways for students, allows qualified and willing instructors to provide top quality instruction, and would help to build a workforce pipeline our industry desperately needs. For these reasons, the Manufacturers Association of Maine strongly supports this bill and ask the committee to unanimously vote ought to pass.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to try to answer any questions you may have.

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