



LD 176 Ought to Pass Testimony

Feb 3, 2022

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. I am Kevin Jordan, MSAD #46 Superintendent of Schools, representing the towns of Dexter, Exeter, Garland, and Ripley. I am here today to provide testimony in favor of LD 176: *An Act To Facilitate a Grade 9 to 16 School Project*. LD 176 would create a Community School District (CSD) framework to allow this pilot project to continue.

Maine has a proud history of supporting integrated education, particularly with a Comprehensive School model. From Mt. Blue to Oxford Hills to, most recently, Sanford, Maine has pushed and nurtured integrative and innovative learning to blend the traditional high school academic curriculum with the pathways offered in Career and Technical Education centers. It is with keeping that history and foresight in mind that I hope you support this legislation as it will further Maine's innovation and integration of academic and career and technical education.

In 2017, the Commissioner and the State Board initiated a pilot project to support the design of an Integrated, Consolidated 9-16 Facility pilot project, under the provisions of 20-A MRS §15905 and Chapter 61 State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects Section 15. The intent of Section 15 is to create a new regional high school integrated with a career and technical school, the University of Maine System, the Maine Community College System and that supports industry training programs.

The school districts of MSAD #4, MSAD #41, MSAD #46, and RSU #64, as well as the Tri-County Technical Center, have been working to create a new Regional Comprehensive High School. This school would be unique in that it will:

- Create authentic and relevant real-world learning experiences and pathways for all students through *career-oriented clusters and pathways*, based on emerging labor market data, that blend traditional high school academics and skills learned in career and technical education,
- Provide affordable *post-secondary certifications and degrees* for all students and community members in a region of the state where access to such certifications and degrees can be challenging to obtain,
- Increase local community, business, and industry partnerships to help *solve real challenges* through apprenticeships, internships, and problem-based learning opportunities based on community, business, and industry needs,
- Establish a pipeline of highly skilled career-ready employees to fill the needs of local and regional industry partners, and
- Establish a pipeline of highly skilled college-ready students.

The Regional Comprehensive High School facility would be a *fully integrated learning environment* that is designed on 21st century learning principles, federal and state labor statistics and data, state and national standards (academic, career and technical education, and industry), and would provide a "one campus design" for all students *and* community members to embed themselves into an educational system that is focused on *career-oriented clusters*. The *career-oriented* clusters and academic programs offered by this school would be intentionally designed to be adaptable and



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flexible to meet the industry and economic needs for an unpredictable future and economy.

The facility and program would provide an explicit, authentic, and relevant school-to-career and/or school-to-college “pipeline” through apprenticeships, internships, and early college/dual enrollment opportunities for all students. Industry and higher education partners have enthusiastically agreed to commit to supplying on-site instruction, materials, resources, and more. Further, the facility is built with community development in mind. Initial designs and conversations include creating and housing a “*Community Design Center*,” a specific place for community organizations, industry partners, and more to work with the students and teachers to address a real problem or challenge, and put the students and school to work on designing real and applicable solutions to that real-world problem.

This legislation would open the door for these four school districts to collaborate, consolidate, and create a new and innovative comprehensive high school facility.

I urge you to support innovation, collaboration, and authentic learning in Maine, and vote “Ought To Pass” on LD 176.

Respectfully submitted,

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MSAD #41 Superintendent of Schools Michael Wright

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MSAD #46 Superintendent of Schools Kevin Jordan

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RSU #64 Superintendent of Schools Rhonda Sperrey