



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

In Support of

L.D. 176 “An Act To Facilitate a Grade 9 to 16 School Project”

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Jason Judd and I am the Executive Director at Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony supporting L.D. 176.

Educate Maine’s mission is to ensure that all Maine people are prepared to succeed in their education and careers and able to reach their highest educational potential. As a member of the MaineSpark coalition, we collaborate with more than 100 organizations to increase education attainment for Maine people and meet the state goal of 60% of Maine adults with a postsecondary credential of value by 2025.

As we understand the legislation, this bill would allow the incredible collaboration of MSAD #4, MSAD #41, MSAD #46, RSU #64, and Tri-County Technical Center to create a Community School District (CSD) framework to support students in the local region. We are proud to support the pilot project especially because the school districts are working closely with the University of Maine System, Maine Community College System, and local industry leaders to create a new Regional Comprehensive High School to improve student outcomes and opportunities in the local region.

The school will have rigorous academic expectations, real world learning opportunities, and CTE programming to help students prepare for a variety of career pathways. The school will be a center of learning for everyone in the community. The facility would also attract young families back to the community which would support the local economy.

According to the Lumina Foundation, 32.1% of adults in Piscataquis County have a degree or credential of value. Unfortunately this percentage is more than 20 points lower than the statewide average. By 2025, more than 60% of the jobs in Maine will require a degree or credential of value. This bill will help the current high schools and colleges in the region to work together to ensure students and adults are able to transition to high quality postsecondary education programs in the local region. This comprehensive school will increase education attainment in the region which will help strengthen the local communities.

We strongly encourage committee members to vote in favor of this bill. The partners are working collectively to engage students in the region with robust opportunities which will help better prepare them for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. We need to keep encouraging school districts and higher education partners to work together to meet the needs of local communities; this bill will do just that.

Jason Judd
Educate Maine