



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

In Support Of

L.D. 436: “An Act to Provide Career and Technical Education Students with Credit Toward High School Graduation for Work Completed in Career and Technical Education Centers and Regions”

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Jason Judd, the Executive Director of Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization. In addition, we are one of the founders of the MaineSpark Coalition, the state attainment coalition focused on increasing adult education attainment to 60% by 2025 to address the needs of our economy.

I am writing to you today to support L.D. 436. Through a partnership with the Maine State Board of Education and Maine Department of Education, Educate Maine convened a group of CTE stakeholders in 2022 over a six-month period to discuss systemic barriers to CTE expansion. This group of more than 20 stakeholders including State Board members, CTE directors, school counselors, higher education staff, principals, superintendents, Maine DOE staff, and other partners discussed a variety of systemic barriers and recommended solutions to address these barriers. As part of this process, the group prioritized the most pressing barriers to CTE expansion. High school graduation credits were the number one barrier prioritized by this group due to the number of students unable to attend CTE regions and centers because of master schedule limitations and high school graduation requirements. As a result of this work, the State Board of Education has prioritized funding to help sending schools and CTE regions and centers collaborate on innovative solutions to address graduation requirements.

Currently, there are a variety of models for CTE students to attain high school graduation credits through their sending high schools. Unfortunately these models are not consistent across the state so some students are able to earn core credits for CTE participation while others can only earn elective credits. Some sending schools have worked collaboratively with CTE regions and centers to review each CTE program and determine appropriate equivalency credits while others have not. As you will hear from some CTE directors, students within the same CTE classroom often earn different core credits from their sending high schools despite taking the same CTE program and meeting the same outcomes. This practice puts some students at a disadvantage based on what public school they attend. If we want to expand CTE pathways in Maine, we must address this systemic barrier with both innovative best practices and appropriate legislation.

As a business-led education nonprofit, Educate Maine champions career and technical education because these programs directly address our workforce challenges. In 2022, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, the Maine Development Foundation, and Educate Maine released *Making Maine Work* which highlighted the results of a survey of Maine’s business community

about the most important priorities for the Administration. Three of the top six priorities focused on expanding the workforce. The need for skilled technical workers is significant in Maine, and CTE programs are often where students are able to learn these technical skills. In order to expand CTE education in Maine, we must address the systemic barriers that often prevent students from attending which include graduation requirements. In addition, CTE centers and regions are often where high school students earn their first industry credentials which helps Maine reach its 60% by 2025 state attainment goal. We need to expand the number of students in these pathways and supporting this bill is a positive first step.

Thank you for your time. I am available if you have any questions.