

Testimony of Simon West for The Maine State Chamber of Commerce In Support
of

L.D. 1942 An Act to Ensure Equity in Career and Technical Education Staffing Support Ratios
Across Varied Regions of the State

Chairs Rafferty and Brennan, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Simon West. I reside in Gardiner and I represent the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, a statewide business association made up of both large and small businesses, here to provide you with my testimony in support of LD1942

The business community is pleased to see the growth in career and technical education programs over the past several years. The expansion of these programs has done well to help the state reach certificate of value and education attainment goals. As a member of the MaineSpark Coalition, the Maine State Chamber values efforts to expand the size and skills of Maine's future workforce. Reducing barriers to this type of educational experience is a top priority for the Chamber and its business community members. While these programs have expanded, there are areas of the state that have difficulty meeting current student-teacher ratios. This difficulty is based on population, not demand for the program. This legislation will give schools, regardless of location, the ability to continue programs that are drivers for their local economies. Technical education and career readiness in many fields, including healthcare, are essential to the future success of Maine's rural communities.

Current student-teacher ratios can put CTE programs at risk when areas have small dips in population, even for short periods of time. When a program is discontinued it can be a difficult and expensive task to reimplement when the population returns ratios back to accepted levels. This risk is very real in rural areas and can make it difficult for schools plan on future investments, develop

curriculum that continues to meet industry standards, and generate a reliable pipeline of talent for the businesses and organizations that fuel local economies.

This legislation would help save critical CTE programs, help to level the field regardless of geographic location, and keep decisions about the validity and future of CTE programs at the local level. I ask that you please support this bill and consider the many positive outcomes that will result from this change in ratio structure.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our testimony.