

**TESTIMONY
OF
PENDER MAKIN, COMMISSIONER
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
And the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Hearing Date: January 25, 2023, 1:00 pm

LD 206 “An Act to Make Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and to Change Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023”

Senators Rotundo and Rafferty, Representatives Sachs and Brennan, and Members of the Joint Standing Committees, my name is Pender Makin and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Education. I am here today to present testimony for those departmental items in the supplemental budget bill.

Some initiatives in this budget will impact more than one program. For this reason, initiatives for the same purpose will appear across several areas of my testimony. The repeated explanations will be summarized and underlined to identify that they were described earlier.

PART A

GENERAL PURPOSE AID FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS (GPA)

This program provides state funding to support local schools through the Essential Programs and Services (EPS) formula and through targeted education funds. The program relies on a variety of data systems and property valuation information provided through Maine Revenue Services to calculate both the total cost of public education in Maine and the % share for which each municipality will be responsible.

The program has **two initiatives** that may be found on page **A-17**.

The **first initiative** reorganizes an Education Specialist III to a Public Service Coordinator II, approved by the Bureau of Human Resources on October 12, 2022, and reduces All Other to fund the reorganization. This position serves as Transportation Director to plan, develop and administer the school bus purchasing and school bus refurbishment programs. The position also provides technical assistance and resources to school administrative units in areas including school bus safety, buildings and grounds safety, and maintenance. New responsibilities will include contracting and procurement duties. A greater degree of technical expertise will also be required to advise and support school administrative units in matters related to electric school buses.

The **second initiative** provides an allocation of \$2,220,831 in FY23 based on projected revenue from the Oxford Casino as recommended by the Revenue Forecasting Committee in their December 2022 report. This funding is included as part of the state's share of the total cost of education.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

This program encompasses the work of the commissioner's office, covering all areas of organizational leadership - including finance, operations, internal human resources, internal and external communications. This team is also responsible for all pertinent matters impacting the operation of our statewide education system. The Leadership Team also includes special projects and programs; constituent relations; rulemaking processes; development and alignment of policy; and coordination with and among the other departments and agencies throughout state government.

This program has **one initiative** that may be found on page **A-17**.

This initiative adjusts funding among several department teams to support costs for financial and human resources services provided by the General Government Service Center. This initiative consolidates funding for financial and human resources services to the Leadership Team program to fund these departmentwide costs in the appropriate program. Corresponding initiatives are included in the Leadership, School Finance and Operations, Special Services, and Learning Systems teams.

LEARNING SYSTEMS TEAM

The Learning Systems Team is comprised of four work teams who are responsible for implementation of federal programs and grants, including the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (ESEA); the Child and Adult Care Food Program; the National School Lunch Program; Supply Chain Assistance; and several funding streams under the American Rescue Plan. The work teams within Learning Systems include: Assessment and Accountability, Child Nutrition, Elementary & Secondary Education (ESEA), and Emergency Federal Relief Programs (EFRP). The Office coordinates and oversees services related to the efficient utilization of federal funds to support instructional programs and activities in schools across our state. The Office also collects, summarizes, and analyzes student data for performance, public reports, and policy direction while providing technical assistance and professional learning opportunities for school leaders and educators.

The program has **one initiative** that may be found on pages **A-17**.

This initiative, previously mentioned in the Leadership Team program, consolidates funding for financial and human resources services to the Leadership Team to fund these departmentwide costs in the appropriate program.

SCHOOL FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

The School Finance and Operations team is responsible for distribution of general purpose aid for local schools through the essential programs and services funding model. The team also provides: technical assistance to school administrative units to ensure compliance with school finance statutes; oversight of data collection systems across the department; development and maintenance of a longitudinal student data system; and technology support for department personnel.

The program has **three initiatives** that may be found on page **A-18**.

The **first initiative** establishes an Education Specialist III position and provides funding for related All Other costs to support growth in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Public Law 2019, chapter 428 required school administrative units (SAUs) with at least one public school in which at least 50% of students qualified for a free or reduced-price lunch during the preceding school year to participate in the federal CACFP. The fiscal note for this law indicated that the department would require additional staff if SAU participation in the program increased by more than 25%. SAU participation in the program has increased by 32% and is projected to continue rising, requiring the additional position to support program growth.

The **second initiative** provides an appropriation of \$35,000 in FY23 to provide funding to school administrative units for the increased cost of maintaining an internet-based application for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. Public Law 2019, chapter 480 provided ongoing funding to establish and maintain an online application for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. Public Law 2021, chapter 635 provided additional

funding due to an increase in cost above the appropriation. This initiative provides additional funding for the increased cost to maintain the online application.

The **third initiative**, previously mentioned in the Leadership Team program, consolidates funding for financial and human resources services to the Leadership Team to fund these departmentwide costs in the appropriate program.

SPECIAL SERVICES TEAM

This program is dedicated to improving results for students with disabilities, offering leadership, support and oversight for local education agencies. The Office of Special Services ensures the provision of a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities (ages 3 to 22) as well as early intervention services to infants and toddlers (birth through age 2). Our work is accomplished through collaboration with families, school districts, public and private agencies, and other programs.

The program has **one initiative** that may be found on page **A-18**.

This initiative, previously mentioned in the Leadership Team program, consolidates funding for financial and human resources services to the Leadership Team to fund these departmentwide costs in the appropriate program.