

State of Maine  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Testimony of Fern Desjardins, Chair of the Maine State Board of Education

Neither For Nor Against: L.D. 957

An Act Requiring Water Bottle Filling Stations in New and Renovated Public Schools

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Introduced by: Representative Millett

Date: April 18, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Fern Desjardins, Chair of the Maine State Board of Education. I am submitting testimony Neither For Nor Against L.D. 957 An Act Requiring Water Bottle Filling Stations in New and Renovated Public Schools.

L.D. 957 obligates the State Board of Education to adopt rules requiring that new public schools and public schools undergoing renovations be equipped with water bottle filling stations and authorizes students to possess refillable water bottles. The State Board has a rule for Major Capital School Construction projects – Chapter 61. The rule defines the conditions under which the State will subsidize construction projects. It is not meant to include an exhaustive list of all the health and safety requirements in a school, like the need for water bottle filling stations. Including too many things in Chapter 61 and shifting away from its primary function is not the direction the board desires to undertake.

Chapter 125: Basic Approval Standards: Public Schools and School Administrative Units is a joint rule of the State Board of Education and Department of Education. Section 5.10 *Health, Sanitation and Safety Requirements* includes water and sanitation requirements per Maine Department of Health and Human Services Regulations. Section B states that “Drinking water from sanitary fountains shall be available in each school.”

In 2019-2020 an ad hoc committee of the State Board worked with the Department of Education in repealing and replacing Chapter 125. We agreed to the current wording for drinking water in public schools and continue to support it; however, the Board is open to discussions on expanding or rephrasing it to accomplish the goal of L.D. 957 without including all the details of the bill.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.