



## Maine Education Association

Grace Leavitt President | Jesse Hargrove Vice President | Beth French Treasurer  
Rebecca Cole NEA Director | Rachele Bristol Executive Director

### Testimony

### In Support

**LD 193: An Act to Provide Excess General Fund Revenue to the School Revolving Renovation Fund and the Education Stabilization Fund**

**LD 1185: An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Recapitalize the School Revolving Renovation Fund**

**John Kosinski, Government Relations Director, Maine Education Association**

**Before the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee**

**April 24, 2023**

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and other esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee,

My name is John Kosinski (he/him), and I am proud to serve as the Director of Government Relations for the Maine Education Association (MEA). The MEA represents 24,000 educators in the state of Maine, including teachers and other professionals in nearly every public school in the state and faculty and other professional staff in the University of Maine and Community College Systems.

I submit this testimony on behalf of the MEA in support of LD 193, An Act to Provide Excess General Fund Revenue to the School Revolving Renovation Fund and the Education Stabilization Fund and in support of LD 1185, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Recapitalize the School Revolving Renovation Fund.

Our public schools have capital needs. As you are no doubt aware, the state currently operates a school construction program that provides funding for schools on a cycle dependent upon the statutory debt service limit. Every cycle, when the school construction process opens, typically 70 or 80 schools apply for funding but only a small number are approved. In the last cycle (2017/2018), 74 schools applied but only 7 projects received funding. This alone is evidence of the growing capital needs of public schools. When it comes to capital needs, our public schools need state support. The only other option is to ask local taxpayers to foot the bill and when we rely on property taxes for major capital projects the result is unsurprisingly higher property taxes for local residents. What's more, relying on property taxes for capital projects crowds out funding in local school budgets for other key priorities such as raising teacher salaries or wages for ed techs and bus drivers, or potentially programs for students.

The School Revolving Renovation Fund, as established in Title 30-A, §6006-F. School Revolving Renovation Fund, provides no interest loans to schools via the Maine Municipal Bond Bank with specified criteria for qualifying. Priority 1 status projects include fixing a roof, renovations to ensure

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compliance with the American with Disabilities Act, mitigating lead in school drinking water, and improving air quality in schools.

These funds are not to be used to build the next Taj Mahal. Instead, they are dedicated specifically to the basic infrastructure schools, students and educators need and deserve.

LD 193 proposes to add the School Revolving Renovation Fund and the Education Stabilization Fund to the “cascade.” We support this entirely. Diverting unspent funds at the end of the fiscal year into these two funds will set aside funding to help schools with basic capital needs while also storing money away for schools for the inevitable “rainy day.” The Education Stabilization Fund was created last session and is intended to provide resources and financial stability for public schools whenever the state’s revenues take a turn for the worse.

LD 1185 proposes a \$100 million bond measure to replenish funding in the School Revolving Renovation Fund. This bond will help address the backlog of key capital needs of schools. It can help schools address new air quality requirements for schools passed last session. It can help fix issues of lead in school drinking water, again a new and necessary requirement for public schools. Should the Legislature move this issue forward, and we hope you will, we stand ready to make the case to voters about the need for this critical bond measure.

Thank you for your time and your service to the people of Maine. I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.