

Testimony of Jennifer Ladd, Cape Cod Hill Community School, RSU 9, in Support of LD 1527.

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Jennifer Ladd. I am a resident of Temple and interim principal at Cape Cod Hill School in New Sharon.

Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 1527 "An Act To Promote the Community School Program"

I grew up in New Sharon in the seventies and eighties. Though it is, on one hand, heartening that the town remains largely unchanged; it is concerning that many of the same challenges families faced forty to fifty years ago persist. Medical and dental care exist outside the immediate area and the lack of local industry creates longer commutes for working parents, that is, if families can afford one or more vehicles. Furthermore, within the last five years, every local daycare provider completely closed up shop.

In my short time as interim principal of this small school, I have seen the positive impacts of a Community School strategy. The provision of no-cost early morning and after-school care supports families by providing enriching activities for children in a safe environment. Coordination with the Good Shepherd Food Bank and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) of Maine means families have access to nutritious food and education on food preparation and budgeting. Passage of LD 1527 would support districts in adopting the Community School strategy and enhance the efficacy of existing Community Schools as they provide opportunities for students to thrive by supporting "the whole child", thereby improving education for students in all of Maine's locales.

Current grant funding will not be enough to sustain Community Schools as they work to build capacity through needed staffing. Please support this bill as it is an investment in children, families, and our shared future. This model prevents students from being "left behind" because of their address or socioeconomic status.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Maine's children.

Respectfully,



Jennifer Ladd

Interim Principal

Cape Cod Hill Community School

New Sharon

