

TESTIMONY NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST

L.D. 2170

AN ACT TO PRIORITIZE SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS FOR SCHOOLS AFFECTED BY DISASTERS

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Steven Bailey, executive director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association, neither for nor against L.D. 2170.

Our associations support and understand the needs of districts that have dealt with disasters be they fire, flooding or wind damage. We are neither for nor against this bill, however, because we believe there should be a separate funding stream for emergencies or disasters.

Funding should not come out of major capital improvement funds for new construction or significant renovations, which already are underfunded given the age of many of our schools.

The application cycle for new construction only opens up every 6-7 seven years, though the timing of these cycles has been dependent upon economic conditions within the state – when funding could be made available within the legislative approval process.

The Office of School Facilities has initiated the 2024-2025 rating cycle. The application deadline is August 30, 2024. Site visits will begin in September of 2024, and it is anticipated that the rating process will be completed by June of 2025 with a new priority list in place by the end of 2025.

We believe this bill would knock some districts off the major capital improvement funds list and that is not appropriate, fair, or in keeping with what we believe the initial intent of the capital construction fund was to be.

Perhaps now is the time to look at how we fund typical school construction, renovation, and repairs or rebuilding due to unforeseen disasters and put a realistic price tag on what is needed during a regular, ongoing basis.