

John Soifer  
South China  
LD 210

To the State of Maine Appropriations Committee:  
For Hearing 1:00pm, Friday, February 7th:

I appreciate and value this opportunity to testify on the Governor's and legislature's possible reduction of support for education for Maine students! I am writing as a concerned taxpayer, retired former educator and current school board member.

There are two priority functions of the government in my opinion; education and safety. These critical functions allow Mainers to live day to day lives of quality as well as preparing for the future with students' education.

Budgets are always a challenge of choices with ongoing restraints. That being said, their need to be priorities. I sincerely value all your time and work for the people of the State and really encourage you to look at and support the funding needs of education across the many challenges it is facing now.

As a taxpayer; the 55% education funding needs to continue for the future of the economy of Maine with a highly educated workforce. It should be taken for granted that free meals for all students prek-12 will be funded fully. Who wants to say they let children go hungry as they used to be? Or, a return to the local and property tax issues that were so unfair across the State. Also, so districts don't need to loose positions of educators, leading to a loss of programs and/or larger than manageable class sizes.

As a former educator of special needs students for 25 years, funding of education is critical for All students so there'll be programing appropriate for every students' needs. Additionally, the shortage of educators is becoming a true crisis as senior educators continue to retire and the next generation are not going to go into or stay in an education career with the current salaries. They need and deserve a competitive salary and higher base/starting salary!

As a school board member; the local taxpayers can only be asked to carry a reasonable amount of the cost. If State funding is not increased, budgets will need to be cut or taxpayers will reject budgets and all the educational benefits for students are reduced and/or in jeopardy.

Finally, importantly, in all three of my roles is continued support of mental health needs and higher, post-secondary funding increases for the obvious need of an educated population and the economy.

I do understand it is a list of many needs, but it is an investment in the future of the State and the current well-being of the children of Maine.

Sincerely and thank you for all you are doing,  
John Soifer