

Tyler Backus
OAKLAND
LD 71

Testimony in Support of LD 71
Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee
26 February 2025

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Tyler Backus and I am here today to testify in strong support of LD 71, which seeks to address funding disparities and ensure equitable education for all students in Maine.

The bill's objective aligns with the intent of LD 1 passed by the 122nd Legislature, which guaranteed a minimum state allocation to each school administrative unit (SAU) under 20-A MRSA §15689, sub-§1. This provision was a critical step towards equitable education funding by ensuring that each SAU receives at least the greater of:

1.5% of Essential Programs and Services (EPS) Per-Pupil Rates – This ensures a baseline of state support for both elementary and secondary students, recognizing the fundamental costs of providing quality education.

2. Special Education Costs – By transitioning to cover 100% of special education costs by fiscal year 2008-09, the state acknowledged the necessity of supporting some of our most vulnerable students.

The minimum state allocation under LD 1 was a crucial safety net for SAUs, particularly for those in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, helping them to provide essential educational services despite local fiscal constraints. However, as education costs continue to rise, and disparities in local revenue generation persist, it is imperative to reinforce and update this funding mechanism.

LD 71 builds on this legacy ensuring that no student is left behind due to geographic or economic disparities.

By maintaining and potentially expanding the minimum state share of total allocation, this bill will:

- Provide stability and predictability in school funding.
- Ensure all schools have the necessary resources to meet educational standards.
- Support equitable opportunities for all students, regardless of their zip code.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the committee to support [Bill Title and Number]. I am grateful for the opportunity to present this testimony and am happy to answer any questions or provide further information.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Tyler Backus
Oakland, Maine