

## **MAINE SERVICE CENTERS COALITION**

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### **Testimony of the Maine Service Centers Coalition LD 71, An Act Regarding Special Education Funding**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, the Maine Service Centers Coalition is submitting testimony in support of LD 71, An Act Regarding Special Education Funding.

The Maine Service Centers Coalition, comprised of 26 towns and cities across the state, articulates the importance of healthy and thriving service center communities, advocates for public policy that supports and contributes to the economic and social viability of our communities, and collaborates with municipal officials, legislators, state agencies and non-profits to pursue quality of life for all who live and work in our state.

The Coalition gives it full support to Representative Mathieson's proposal in LD 71 to increase to 55 percent the state's share of a school administrative unit's special education costs beginning in the upcoming fiscal year.

Like you, we all want every student to receive the best possible education so they are able to live up to their full abilities and potentials. That will be more of a challenge as municipalities see their special education costs become an ever increasing portion of their education budgets, like they have in each of our service center communities.

Municipalities must offer their own classes, which are hampered by a scarcity of special education personnel and rising salaries, or contract with private schools that have raised their tuition rates. Private schools also require a year-long contract regardless of how many days a student attends as well as transportation in the midst of a bus driver shortage.

Any additional relief from the state, such as increasing its share of funding, would certainly help our communities meet this challenge. It would also provide relief to our property taxpayers who otherwise will continue to absorb these higher costs.

We urge you to support LD 71 so our cities and towns may continue to provide students with the education they need and deserve.

Thank you for your time.