



February 25, 2025

Testimony in Support of LD 98
An Act to Include School Counselors in the Educators for Maine Program

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, on behalf of the Maine School Counselor Association (MESCA), which supports the success of all students by empowering, uniting, and advocating for Maine School Counselors, we are submitting this testimony in strong support of LD 98, which seeks to expand the Educators for Maine Program to include school counselors as eligible positions.

Maine faces a growing shortage of school counselors, particularly in rural and underserved communities. School counselors play a critical role in fostering student success, addressing mental health challenges, ensuring career and college readiness, and fostering a connection between home and school. Often, they are the sole provider of these services in their communities. The need for well-trained, accredited professionals is at an all-time high, and this bill provides an effective mechanism to attract and retain qualified individuals in these essential roles.

School counselors align directly with the goals of LD 98, which prioritizes supporting education professionals in areas with the greatest need. By incentivizing individuals to pursue school counseling, Maine can work toward addressing gaps in student support services, ensuring every child has access to the support and mental health resources they deserve.

Including school counselors in the Educators for Maine Program is both fiscally viable and necessary. The Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) currently administers this program, and expanding the eligibility criteria to include school counselors would be a seamless addition. A person does not casually go into the field of school counseling; the field has grown and evolved over the years, now requiring a master's degree with 60 credit hours, a 600-hour internship (often unpaid), and practicum experience, which leads to a hefty price tag for individuals looking to support students and provide them the opportunities for success in Maine.

For these reasons, I urge you to support LD 98 132 to strengthen Maine's educational workforce and provide necessary assistance to those committed to serving our students. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Edelman PhD, MESCA Board Chair (chair@maineschoolcounselor.org)
Scott Harris EdS, MESCA Past Board Chair