

School Union #93

Blue Hill • Brooksville • Castine • Penobscot • Surry

Derek Perkins, Superintendent of Schools
Dawn McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent
Sheila Irvine, Director of Special Services

Derek Perkins
Superintendent of Schools, School Union #93
Board Member, Dirigo Reads
21 Horseshoe Lane, Hampden, Maine 04444
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Testimony in Support of Dirigo Reads
Before the State of Maine Legislature

Dear Chairperson, esteemed members of the committee,

I am honored to submit this testimony in strong support of Dirigo Reads, a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering literacy among Maine's youth by providing every first-grade student with a new book each month. As the Superintendent of Schools for School Union #93 and a proud member of the Dirigo Reads Board of Directors, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact this program has on our students and communities.

The ability to read proficiently is a fundamental cornerstone of academic success and lifelong opportunity. Research consistently demonstrates that early exposure to books and literacy-rich environments significantly enhances a child's cognitive development, language skills, and future academic achievements. Dirigo Reads directly addresses this critical need by ensuring that first-grade students—regardless of socioeconomic status—have access to high-quality reading materials.

In School Union #93, both the Adams School in Castine and Surry Elementary School actively participate in the Dirigo Reads program, and the results have been remarkable. Teachers report that students are more engaged with reading, demonstrate greater confidence in their literacy skills, and eagerly anticipate receiving their monthly books. Parents have shared stories of increased reading at home, fostering a culture of literacy that extends beyond the classroom. By making books accessible and exciting, Dirigo Reads not only supports academic success but also cultivates a lifelong love of reading.

The benefits of this program extend far beyond the individual student. A literate population strengthens Maine's workforce, reduces barriers to economic and social mobility, and enhances the overall well-being of our communities. Investing in early literacy is one of the most effective ways to ensure a brighter future for our state.

I urge you to support initiatives that expand and sustain the mission of Dirigo Reads. By investing in early literacy, we are investing in Maine's future. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the education and well-being of our children.

Sincerely,

Derek Perkins
Superintendent of Schools, School Union #93
Board Member, Dirigo Reads