

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education,

I am writing to express my strong support for LD 360, which seeks to add funding to the Dirigo Reads program. As a first-grade teacher in Orono at Asa Adams Elementary School, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact this program has on my students and their early literacy development.

Dirigo Reads plays a critical role in providing access to high-quality books for young learners. In my classroom, I see the excitement and engagement that comes from students receiving their own books to take home and cherish. These books are not just objects; they are gateways to new worlds, new ideas, and a lifelong love of reading.

The importance of early literacy cannot be overstated. By getting more books into the hands of young readers, Dirigo Reads directly supports the development of crucial skills that form the foundation for future academic success. Children who have access to books at home are more likely to develop strong vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking skills. This program helps bridge the literacy gap and ensures that all children, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have the opportunity to thrive.

My students are always thrilled when they receive their Dirigo Reads books. The joy and enthusiasm they display are a testament to the program's effectiveness. It's not just about giving them books; it's about fostering a love of reading that will stay with them throughout their lives.

Funding for Dirigo Reads is an investment in the future of Maine's children. It is an investment in their education, their potential, and their ability to become successful, engaged members of our community. I urge you to support LD 360 and ensure that this vital program continues to benefit Maine's youngest learners.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Megan Dreher

First-Grade Teacher

Asa Adams Elementary School