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LD 360

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education, I am submitting this testimony in favor of LD 360, An Act Supporting the Dirigo Reads Literacy Program.

I am a native Mainer, born and raised in Old Town, and received my undergraduate and masters degrees in education from the University of Maine. I currently work as a literacy specialist at Readfield Elementary in the Maranacook RSU 38 school district.

In my work, I see the positive impacts in kids who have the opportunity to read a good book. Those impacts are dramatically increased when children have the opportunity to fall in love with that book.

I also see families that have severe economic challenges and are unable to purchase books for their kids. Not having books in the home drastically impacts a child's ability to not just learn to read, but to learn to love to read.

Dirigo Reads' mission is to fill this gap by providing books to first graders throughout the state.

I have seen this program grow from its inception with six schools to now serving over 100 schools in Maine. The goal is to cover all public schools in Maine, which requires greater resources.

I believe there is no better investment we can make than in our children. I believe that as an educator and as a mom of two. I also believe that Dirigo Reads is a unique program, providing a unique opportunity for the state to invest in our kids' literacy health without needing to make significant investments in overhead. This investment will be specifically for books, which will directly help our children.

I urge your strong support of LD 360. Thank you.

Rachael Boucher
Literacy Specialist