

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 99

### AN ACT TO CLARIFY INFORMATION SHARING BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AND SCHOOLS WITH RESPECT TO INVESTIGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

March 12, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Eileen King, the deputy executive director of the Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association in support for L.D. 99, which seeks to improve communication between the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Maine's schools regarding investigations into child abuse and neglect.

This legislation is a critical step toward ensuring that schools are better informed when an employee or student is found to be involved in an out-of-home abuse or neglect case. Schools are responsible for the well-being and safety of the children in their care, and timely, transparent communication from DHHS is essential in helping administrators take appropriate action to protect students and maintain a safe learning environment.

L.D. 99 will:

- Clarify that DHHS has the authority to share information with schools when conducting investigations.
- Strengthen communication between schools and DHHS, improving collaboration and ensuring schools have the necessary details to respond appropriately to safety concerns.
- Help schools identify if they have an employee or student who has been involved in neglect within their own household, which is critical information for ensuring the safety of other children.

Our schools' top priority is creating a learning environment that is safe for our students and our staff members. If instances of abuse or neglect involve employees or students, school administrators need to know so they can take appropriate actions, such as investigating an individual's behavior or offering counseling and support services to students impacted by the situation.

Both of our educational associations have voted to support this legislation, recognizing it as an important step in the right direction. By enabling better communication and access to vital information, L.D. 99 will help schools take proactive steps to protect students and create a safer school environment.

I urge the committee to support L.D. 99 and help ensure that Maine's schools have the tools and information they need to keep students safe. Thank you for your time and consideration.