



Testimony in Support of LD 482:

“An Act to Expand Educational Opportunities and Broaden Educational Services for Students Enrolled in Equivalent Instruction Programs.”

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and the distinguished members of the Committee On Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Harris Van Pate, and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 482, An Act to Expand Educational Opportunities and Broaden Educational Services for Students Enrolled in Equivalent Instruction Programs.

Maine has a long and proud tradition of educational choice, including homeschooling and private instruction, allowing parents to tailor their children’s learning experiences to best suit their needs. In fact, Maine’s town-tuitioning program is the second oldest school choice program in the country, only a few years behind Vermont’s program.¹

Unfortunately, current policies impose undue restrictions on students who pursue non-traditional educational paths, limiting their ability to access public school resources. LD 482 would correct this inequity by placing homeschooled and equivalent instruction students on equal footing with those attending recognized private schools when accessing extracurricular activities and classes in public schools.

This bill represents a critical step toward ensuring fairness in Maine’s education system. Students who attend non-approved private schools or participate in homeschooling programs are treated differently than their peers in recognized private institutions when seeking access to publicly funded educational services. Yet, their families also contribute to the public education system through taxes. LD 482 would eliminate this unnecessary disparity and recognize Maine families' educational contributions and choices.

Expanding access to public school resources for these students is a matter of fairness and benefits the broader community. Participation in public school extracurricular activities, sports, and academic courses provides students with valuable social and educational opportunities while enriching the programs. Allowing greater access encourages collaboration and fosters stronger connections between public schools and the diverse academic choices available to Maine families.

¹

<https://mainepolicy.org/school-choice-map/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CTown%2Dtuitioning%E2%80%9D%20is%20a,Maine%20Attorney%20General%20Richard%20S.>



Opponents may argue that expanding access to public school resources for students in equivalent instruction programs could overburden local schools. However, Maine's existing laws already allow homeschooled students to participate in certain public school activities, and schools have accommodated them without issue.² LD 482 simply ensures that all non-traditional students receive equal and fair opportunities rather than being subject to an arbitrary distinction based on the structure of their education.

By passing LD 482, Maine will reaffirm its commitment to educational freedom and parental choice, ensuring all students have the resources they need to thrive regardless of their academic pathway. For these reasons, we strongly urge the committee to support this legislation and advance it to the entire Legislature for consideration.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

² This is already done by the statute this bill proposes to amend.
<https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/20-a/title20-Asec5021-A.html>