



### **Testimony in Support of LD 512:**

**“An Act to Provide Educational Opportunities for Students in Secondary Schools with 200 or Fewer Students”**

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 512, An Act to Provide Educational Opportunities for Students in Secondary Schools with 200 or Fewer Students.

Maine’s education system must prioritize the needs of students and their families by ensuring access to the best educational opportunities available. Unfortunately, students residing in smaller school administrative units (SAUs) with limited resources often face restricted academic and extracurricular options. LD 512 offers these students greater flexibility by allowing them to enroll in another SAU’s secondary school if accepted, ensuring that all Maine students have access to an education that best fits their needs.

For students in smaller secondary schools, limited course offerings, extracurricular activities, and specialized academic programs can hinder their educational experience. LD 512 empowers families to make the best decision for their child’s future by enabling students to enroll in larger, better-resourced schools. This policy ensures that students in rural and smaller districts are not disadvantaged simply because of where they live.

This bill is also a practical and fiscally responsible approach to expanding school choice. Under LD 512, the financial burden of tuition remains within the public school system, as the receiving SAU invoices the resident SAU for payment at the state's maximum allowable tuition rate. This ensures that no undue financial strain is placed on receiving or sending districts while allowing students greater flexibility in their education.

Similar policies have been successfully implemented in other states, providing students in rural areas with access to enhanced learning opportunities while maintaining financial accountability within the public school system.<sup>1</sup> Critics may argue that this policy could lead to declines in enrollment for smaller secondary schools. However, students should not be forced to remain in a school that does not adequately meet their needs. Instead of viewing this policy as a threat, smaller schools should see it as an opportunity to innovate, improve their offerings, and better serve their student populations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-open-enrollment-policies/>



By passing LD 512, Maine will reaffirm its commitment to educational freedom, equity, and opportunity for all students, regardless of geographic constraints. This legislation is a common sense step toward ensuring every student has access to the resources and learning environment necessary to thrive. We urge the committee to support this bill and advance it to the entire Legislature for consideration. Thank you for your time and consideration.