



Maine School Superintendents Association



OFFICERS—2024-25

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 513

PRESIDENT
MARIA LIBBY
MSAD 28/FIVE TOWN CSD
CAMDEN, 04843

AN ACT TO ALLOW THE SPOUSE OF A SCHOOL BOARD
MEMBER TO SERVE AS A STIPEND EMPLOYEE WITHIN
THE SCHOOL BOARD'S JURISDICTION

PRESIDENT-ELECT
DR. ANDREW DOLLOFF
YARMOUTH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT
YARMOUTH, 04096

March 13, 2025

VICE PRESIDENT
RHONDA SPERREY
RSU 64/MSAD 64
CORINTH, 04427

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Eileen King, executive director of the Maine School Superintendents Association, testifying on behalf of the MSSA Legislative Committee in support of L.D. 513, An Act to Allow the Spouse of a School Board Member to Serve as a Stipend Employee Within the School Board's Jurisdiction.

SECRETARY/TREASURER
BENJAMIN SIROIS
VALLEY UNIFIED REGIONAL
SERVICE CENTER
FORT KENT, 04743

Four years ago, the legislature approved L.D. 1323. This was a carefully crafted proposal designed to, for a limited period of time, create careful guardrails for specific circumstances when school districts could potentially employ the spouse of a school board member.

PAST PRESIDENT
PATRICIA HOPKINS
MSAD 11
GARDINER, 04345

We all know these are delicate situations and can put administrators and educators in difficult positions of supervising the family members of their own bosses. Conflicts of interest can be difficult to navigate. We never want to allow situations of nepotism or political patronage, and we feel the language in that bill achieved that goal by allowing a board, if it wanted, to allow a spouse of a board member to serve as a stipend employee when it is “in the best interest of students,” while disclosing any potential conflicts of interest. It also emphasizes that schools should have policies ensuring that applicants “have a fair and equal opportunity to be selected on merit, with priority consideration given to the best interest of students without restrictions based solely on family association.”

EILEEN E. KING
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This policy only lasted for three years and expired last July. We believe it has worked. Schools have shared with us the challenges of getting enough substitute teachers, coaches and other volunteers – particularly in smaller and more rural communities. L.D. 1323 made it easier for schools to explore every opportunity to bring in the best employee for a position, while including protections to prevent conflicts of interest.

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Leading for equity, excellence and opportunity for all Maine Students

This bill would simply reinstate that policy – a policy we believe has helped our school districts – and would again expire after a limited time. This would continue to allow legislators to watch the impacts of this bill and ensure that it does not lead to any patronage or nepotism. MSSA believes these are fair guardrails that will benefit schools and ensure public accountability. We urge you to support L.D. 513 and help to provide the best education for our children.

Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.