



Maine School Superintendents Association



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

OFFICERS—2024-25

L.D. 747

AN ACT TO PROVIDE FUNDS TO REDUCE STUDENT HOMELESSNESS

March 18, 2025

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

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, I am Eileen King, the executive director of the Maine School Superintendents Association, testifying on behalf of the MSSA legislative committee in support of L.D. 747.

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

VICE PRESIDENT
RHONDA SPERREY
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Over the past two years, the Maine legislature has, for the first time, given our schools important tools to provide critical financial relief to students and families without a permanent place to live each night. Last school year, more than 3,000 students were identified under the McKinney-Vento program. These are Maine's most vulnerable and at-risk students. They are couch-surfing, doubled-up with family or friends, or in temporary hotels or shelters.

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

For years, Maine schools have worked as hard as possible to assist every student using limited resources. Many have added guidance counselors and social workers who connect students and families with basic services: healthcare, SNAP benefits, or housing assistance. Some communities have gone even further, like in Lewiston, where the school has created "The Store Next Door" as a hub to provide clothing, essentials and other needs for homeless students.

PAST PRESIDENT
PATRICIA HOPKINS
MSAD 11
GARDINER, 04345

In 2023, the legislature established a transformative pilot program to allow schools to spend up to \$750 per student to keep students housed. This went towards vital needs: utility bills, transportation, basic grocery cards, and more. And the passage of L.D. 1422, last year, was a welcome complement to this work. It paid for housing navigators at schools to work with students and families and even provided rental assistance to students and their families. Schools have never received enough support to truly serve these students, and this assistance was a groundbreaking attempt to make that happen. Together, these policies have ensured educational stability for our most vulnerable students at a time of immense disruption.

EILEEN E. KING
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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We know that housing instability is still just as dire a challenge today for thousands of Maine students and families. Housing prices continue to rise, and more residents struggle to afford the cost-of-living. Our schools are also concerned about potential cuts to federal education funding, which could directly lessen the ability of districts to support at-risk students. The grant program included in this bill would continue to support our students at a crucial moment, and we urge you to support L.D. 747.

Leading for equity, excellence and opportunity for all Maine Students