

Mayor and Council Offices

Mark Dion

Mayor

March 21, 2025



Testimony of Mayor of the City of Portland, Mark Dion
In Opposition to

**LD 220, An Act to Establish the Hope and Inclusion Scholarship Program in Order to
Provide Funding for Students Attending Certain Private Schools and Students Receiving
Home Instruction**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Mark Dion, Mayor of Portland and I write to provide testimony in opposition to LD 220 on behalf of the City of Portland. Nearly 70,000 Mainers call Portland home and approximately 6,500 students attend our seventeen public schools. LD 220 is “school voucher” legislation that would divert critical resources away from public education and harm our schools.

Under this proposal, state funds that would otherwise go to schools in support of a student and funds that our residents would have contributed to Portland schools in support of that student, would go into a new account to be available for various a la carte educational services for students in private schools or being educated at home. Such a program would exacerbate existing challenges and create new challenges in Portland and elsewhere.

First, because this proposal would divert funds from our local school budget, it will exacerbate existing and ongoing budget challenges. Portland is required by law to serve all students and must pay for its schools, so any diversion of resources would be overcome by increasing property taxes or eroding student services and programming.

Second, this proposal is likely to exacerbate inequities we see in Portland as well as across the state because resources for public schools would instead go to students of families that have already chosen a private option, further enhancing that educational opportunity. Private school tuition or home schooling is a family choice and one that costs money. Public schools would be required to contribute funding for students in private schools and home schools – those in families that have the wherewithal to make that private or home school choice – while perhaps not being able to offer similar educational services in the public school.

Finally, we have concerns about accountability and oversight. Would the newly created board have oversight over these public funds spent for private schools or home schooling? Would they be subject to the same regulations as public schools?

For these reasons, the City of Portland respectfully urges the Committee to vote against this proposal.

With appreciation for your time and your consideration of this Portland perspective.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Dion", with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Mark Dion
Mayor
City of Portland, Maine