



## **Testimony in Opposition of LD 849:**

**“An Act to Establish a Recall Process for Public School Board Members”**

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 opposition to LD 849.

While accountability in public education is essential, LD 849 presents a deeply problematic shift in how local communities govern their schools. This bill would impose a one-size-fits-all, state-mandated recall process on every school board across Maine—regardless of local context, preference, or history. We urge the committee to reject this unnecessary and restrictive measure.

Maine’s tradition of home rule and local control is a cornerstone of our democratic process. School boards are accountable to their communities, and local voters can express dissatisfaction at the ballot box during scheduled local elections. By imposing rigid, statewide criteria for recalling board members, LD 849 undermines this local authority and inserts Augusta further into the affairs of community governance.

Moreover, the bill's language sets an alarmingly strict threshold for initiating and executing a recall. The proposed requirement of petition signatures totaling 25% of the last gubernatorial vote and a 35% turnout threshold for a recall election are not only onerous but could also provoke political turmoil and erode public trust in school governance. Such procedural rigidity may discourage civic engagement and increase polarization—precisely the opposite of what good policy should encourage.

Turnout in strictly local elections is frequently much lower than in gubernatorial races. Considering that many municipalities would need more votes to remove a school member than propose a statewide regulatory rule highlights the absurdity of this rule.<sup>1</sup>

The people of Maine value local accountability, but that accountability must remain in the hands of local voters—not the state. Allowing each school district to establish its own recall mechanisms, if desired by the community, would better preserve the principle of subsidiarity and reflect the diverse needs of Maine’s cities, towns, and rural areas.

LD 849 would impose a top-down mandate that threatens to weaken, not strengthen, civic trust. Rather than fostering responsive governance, this bill risks politicizing school

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<sup>1</sup> <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/5/title5sec8055.html>



boards and deterring qualified citizens from serving in public education leadership roles.

For these reasons, Maine Policy Institute respectfully urges the committee to vote “Ought Not to Pass” on LD 849. Thank you for your time and consideration.