

TESTIMONY NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST

L.D. 1089

AN ACT TO PERMANENTLY FUND 55 PERCENT OF THE STATE'S SHARE OF EDUCATION BY ESTABLISHING A TAX ON INCOMES OF MORE THAN \$1,000,000

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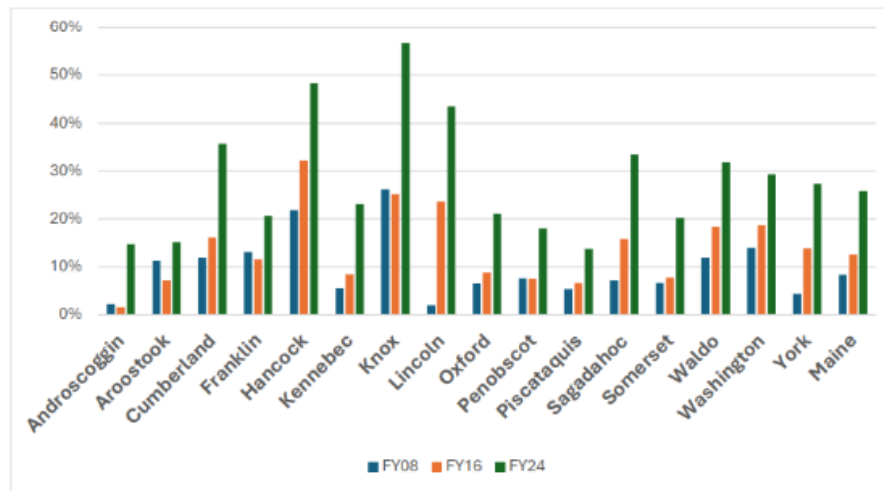
Isabel Ekman, Esq., Chair

March 26, 2025

Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier, and esteemed members of the Committee on Taxation, I am Robbie Feinberg, the director of communications and government relations at the Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committee of the Maine School Boards Association neither for nor against L.D. 1089.

I want to begin our testimony by sharing this graph, provided by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute to the Education Committee earlier this session:

Spending Above EPS by County, FY08 to FY24



Maine’s Essential Programs and Services funding formula was created nearly two decades ago, with a goal of providing equitable educational opportunities to every student in Maine. Each year, the state sets a “Total Cost of Public Education” across the state, and pays for a portion of that cost.

The above graph demonstrates that more and more, our school districts are spending far above that “total cost of education.” [According to MEPRI](#), school budgets during Fiscal Year 2024 included at least an additional \$604 million dollars over EPS – all paid by local taxpayers. Student needs are clearly growing, and local school boards are dealing with a flood of rising expenses: special education costs, transportation, upkeep of decaying school buildings, services for homeless and economically disadvantaged students. Many are also working to add more educators, such as reading and math coaches and interventionists, to help students catch up and reach academic proficiency.

Maine school boards are committed to supporting every student, but we also know that our local taxpayers cannot handle higher property taxes. That is why we need continued, robust state support.

We are thankful that you and your fellow lawmakers – both Democrats and Republicans – have met the state’s obligation since 2021 and provided 55 percent of K-12 education costs. This has offered crucial economic security to Maine schools, allowing local school boards to plan budgets without fear that funding will be pulled out from under them. However, this has not solved Maine’s education funding challenges. That is clearly evident during the current school budget season, as several districts are being forced to weigh significant layoffs in order to balance their budgets. Many districts are also concerned about uncertainty around federal funding.

In this current climate, Maine school board members feel strongly that lawmakers must look at new ways of ensuring consistent state education funding moving forward, and we support the goal of L.D. 1089 in moving in that direction.

MSBA is “neither for nor against” this bill because we do not wish to weigh in on exactly how the state should find these additional funds for public education. But we firmly believe that more resources are needed to help our schools, staff, and students, and we urge your committee to consider new funding streams to assist public education.