



Maine School Superintendents Association



TESTIMONY NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST

L.D. 974

OFFICERS—2024-25

RESOLVE, TO INCREASE THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE BY CREATING THE MAINE PROMISE INITIATIVE

March 26, 2025

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Eileen King, the executive director for the Maine School Superintendents Association, testifying on behalf of the MSSA legislative committee neither for nor against L.D. 974.

L.D. 974 seeks to establish the Maine Promise Initiative with the goal of increasing high school graduation rates to at least 95% by 2030, including specific targets for identified student populations who face systemic challenges. The resolve outlines the creation of a strategic plan by the Department of Education and a one-time appropriation of \$100,000 to support the initiative's development.

The intent behind this proposal—to improve educational outcomes and ensure more students complete their secondary education—is commendable. A high school diploma is a critical milestone that can open pathways to post-secondary education, career opportunities, and long-term economic stability. Targeting support for student populations who historically experience lower graduation rates is also an important step in addressing educational equity, and focusing on those populations can help our state to target specific strategies and instructional approaches to help these students succeed.

However, there are considerations that warrant further discussion. The initiative's success will likely depend on a comprehensive and sustainable implementation plan beyond the initial appropriation. Ensuring that school districts have the necessary resources, personnel, and community partnerships to support students at risk of not graduating will be critical. Additionally, coordination with existing state and local programs aimed at dropout prevention, alternative education pathways, and student support services should be a key component of the initiative. We believe that adult education needs to be a key part of any conversations, as well. More and more students are turning to adult education to receive a high school degree, and the incorporation and recognition of these efforts must be recognized.

The working group tasked with developing the strategic plan should include a diverse range of stakeholders, including school administrators, educators, students, and community organizations, to ensure the initiative is both practical and responsive to the needs of Maine's students. Furthermore, ongoing assessment and transparent reporting will be essential in determining the effectiveness of the initiative and whether adjustments are needed to meet its ambitious goals.

L.D. 974 presents a well-intended effort to increase high school graduation rates in Maine. While its success will depend on strong planning, adequate resources, and stakeholder collaboration, the resolve provides a foundation for further discussion on how best to support students on their path to graduation.

Leading for equity, excellence and opportunity for all Maine Students