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MSAD 51
LD 607

Good Morning Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

Please vote 'no' on LD 607.

LD 607 would negatively impact educational opportunity both in school districts that would be forced to accept non-resident students, and in districts that may experience declining enrollment.

In many districts, superintendents are already inundated each year with requests to enroll non-resident students. Currently, superintendents work with the families and the superintendent in the student's home district to determine what is in the best interest of the child. If LD 607 were to pass, those personal conversations and professional considerations would no longer matter.

My district, MSAD #51 (Cumberland-North Yarmouth), has been experiencing steady student enrollment growth over the last decade and is projected to continue growing for the next 8-10 years at least. I have had to deny many requests over the years due to lack of capacity as our district currently has 29 modular classrooms in use and a 100% locally-funded school project in the works but not expected to be completed until 2027. Already, projections show our schools will be close to capacity when we move in.

This bill would cause harm to students in receiving districts due to an increase in class sizes and a strain on resources. This is unfair to students whose schools must accept students from other communities with a small corresponding increase in funding.

Asking the taxpayers of communities like Cumberland- North Yarmouth to invest considerable funds in educating students who live in the towns is challenging enough. To expect that they will take on additional expenses simply because students want to come to their schools from other communities is simply not fair. It could easily create a backlash against school expenses, likely resulting in a further strain on resources. This will harm programming for resident students, whose parents pay a significant tax bill to benefit the school and their child's education each year.

For students from the sending district, declining enrollment may lead to reduced programming and a lack of breadth and depth in the curriculum. I know from colleagues in more challenging academic settings that the loss of students can be devastating to a small school.

This bill is unfair to students, unfair to taxpayers, and dismissive of the personal nature of Maine education. I urge you to not support LD 607.