

**Testimony of Eric Waddell, Superintendent of Schools, Kittery School District**  
Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee  
Regarding LD 218

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding LD 218. My name is Eric Waddell, and I serve as the Superintendent of Schools for the Kittery School District. I appreciate the chance to share my perspective on the superintendent transfer agreement process and the potential impact that LD 218 may have on our schools and communities.

I am a strong proponent of the current statute governing superintendent transfer agreements, which requires both superintendents involved to determine that a transfer is in the best interest of the student, along with parental approval. My experience with this process has been overwhelmingly positive. I work closely with my neighboring superintendent colleagues when such requests arise, and we take our responsibility seriously in ensuring that these decisions truly serve the student's best interest.

The proposed changes in LD 218 raise several concerns for communities like Kittery, which is home to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, the largest employer in York County. With approximately 8,000 civilian employees, most of whom live outside Kittery due to the area's limited affordable housing inventory, I receive numerous transfer requests from families residing in other towns who wish for their children to attend Kittery schools for convenience. While I occasionally approve such requests when a family has recently moved out of Kittery to a nearby community, my colleagues and I believe it is in a student's best interest to remain in the same school for the remainder of the school year, with the understanding that they will transition to their new district the following

year. If I were required to automatically renew transfer agreements, I would be far less likely to approve them initially, a sentiment I know is shared by my fellow superintendents.

Another critical factor for the Committee to consider related to LD 218 is the recent transition of responsibility for 3 to 5-year-olds with an IEP from Child Development Services (CDS) to local school administrative units (SAUs). Kittery is among the 17 early adopter districts in Maine implementing this transition during the current school year. We quickly realized that some children with an IEP who attend private preschools or daycare centers in Kittery actually reside in neighboring towns such as Eliot, Wells, York, and Kennebunk. Many of these children require services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language services, or specially designed instruction. By entering into a superintendent transfer agreement for these young students, we are able to provide these essential services efficiently before they enter their public school while ensuring that the associated costs are reimbursed through the DOE. This approach benefits both the children and the school district. However, if transfer agreements were required to be automatically renewed beyond age five, the financial burden on Kittery would be unsustainable. As a minimum receiver of state funds, our district already bears a significant financial responsibility, and any additional mandated transfers would only increase the burden on local taxpayers. Our early intervention approach would be dramatically different if the transfer agreement rules changed.

In summary, superintendent transfer agreements play a crucial role in ensuring that student transitions are handled thoughtfully and effectively. The current statute provides

the necessary safeguards to make these agreements work in the best interest of students, while also considering the needs of local school districts. I urge the Committee to carefully consider the unintended consequences of altering a system that is already functioning well and is serving an important purpose.

I appreciate your commitment to Maine's students and school communities, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.