

**Testimony of Eric Waddell, Superintendent of Schools, Kittery School District**  
Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee  
Regarding LD 607

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding LD 607. 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 these proposed legislative changes 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 607 raise several concerns for communities like Kittery. Allow me to highlight a significant challenge related to the proposed requirement that capacity be the sole consideration for approving transfer agreements. Kittery has the highest population of military-connected families in Maine, leading to a fluid student population with nearly 20% of students transitioning in or out over the course of a year or two. Given this reality, determining capacity is an ongoing challenge. At any given moment, we may have an open seat available for a transfer student, but we must also ensure that space remains for military-connected students who may arrive

unexpectedly. Relying solely on capacity as the determining factor for approving transfers fails to acknowledge the complexities that districts like Kittery face in maintaining the necessary flexibility for incoming military families.

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. When I am weighing the merits of a superintendents transfer agreement, I consider many factors including:

### **1. Student's Educational Needs**

- Does the receiving district offer specialized programs (e.g., special education, gifted programs, career and technical education) that better meet the student's needs?
- Will the transfer provide a more suitable learning environment for the student (e.g., smaller class sizes, more academic support)?
- Has the student experienced academic struggles or disengagement in their current school?

### **2. Student's Social-Emotional and Behavioral Well-Being**

- Would the transfer support the student's mental health and overall well-being?
- Has the student experienced bullying, harassment, or social difficulties in the current school?

- Is there a documented medical or psychological reason supporting a change in school placement?

### **3. Stability and Continuity of Education**

- Is the student in the middle of a critical academic transition (e.g., senior year of high school, moving between elementary and middle school)?
- Will the new school allow the student to maintain or improve relationships with peers and supportive adults?

### **4. Family and Custodial Considerations**

- Does the student have unique family circumstances, such as living with a relative or in foster care, that justify the transfer?
- Is there a significant change in family dynamics (e.g., divorce, relocation) that necessitates the move?
- Will the transfer support a more stable home-school routine, reducing stress on the student and family who may be in transition?

### **5. Transportation and Logistics**

- How will the student commute to and from the new school? Will transportation be feasible for the family?

### **6. Attendance and Discipline History**

- Does the student have a history of attendance or behavioral concerns that would impact their success in a new setting?
- Would the new school provide better support or interventions to help the student succeed?

## **7. Financial and Policy Implications**

- Does the request comply with state and district policies regarding superintendent agreements?
- Are there financial considerations for the receiving district?
- Would granting this transfer set a precedent for future requests?

## **8. Receiving District's Capacity**

- Does the receiving district have the necessary space, staffing, and resources to accommodate the student?

Most importantly, I want the Committee to understand that these considerations are not static. Student's needs, family dynamics, and school culture are dynamic; as such, it is critically important to weigh all these factors when considering whether a transfer agreement should be continued or not.

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.

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

