

TESTIMONY OF JONATHAN MOODY

Superintendent of Schools

MSAD #54

Canaan, Cornville, Mercer, Norridgewock, Skowhegan, Smithfield

SUBMITTED TO THE

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

AGAINST ADOPTION OF LD 218

April 2, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education Committee, I am Jonathan Moody, Superintendent of Schools in MSAD 54, serving the towns of Canaan, Cornville, Mercer, Norridgewock, Skowhegan and Smithfield. I write to you in opposition to LD 218.

As I shared in my testimony on LD 607, MSAD 54, like many districts, has numerous superintendent agreements with neighboring schools designed to support both the students and our school communities. Although LD 218 seeks to streamline the process for superintendent agreements, I believe it would have significant negative unintended consequences for kids and families.

Superintendents put a great deal of time into assessing the impact of an agreement both on the student in question as well as the school community. It is already incredibly rare for a superintendent agreement to be reversed if the student is having success in the school they transferred to. Generally, any change at this point is most often the result of a change in family circumstances. The agreement process comes with risks, which include a district's ability to program for a student, class size, staffing challenges, etc. This bill may cause Superintendents to be more hesitant with the initial approval of an agreement knowing that that agreement is permanent. The current process does allow for some flexibility where the parties can discuss the potential pitfalls of a transfer but agree to give it a year to see if those concerns are valid. The passage of LD 218 may remove the flexibility that exists in the current process and lead to less agreements being approved. I believe the committee would be better served considering other adjustments to the transfer language currently in statute.

This fall a few of my colleagues and I had the opportunity to work with Chair Fern Desjardins and her fellow State Board of Education members to craft adjustments to the current agreement process. We believe that bill will provide greater clarity and consistency to the superintendent agreement process and would benefit both our students and families as well as our communities. As I'm sure you are aware, the State Board of Education hears regularly from parents, superintendents, students, and the Maine Department of Education regarding superintendent agreements. The State Board is the final stop in the appeals process for these agreements and they have a strong working knowledge of how they impact both families and schools. As I said in my testimony against LD 607, I believe that the bill that the State Board will be supporting

later this session is a far better approach to creating consistency and fairness state-wide and would ask that you consider supporting its passage in this legislative session.

Although I understand the intent of LD 218, I believe it would have unintended consequences that would negatively impact students. I simply don't believe it is the right bill with respect to superintendent agreement transfer requests. I would ask that you consider supporting the bill crafted by the Maine State Board of Education and would gladly answer any questions you might have regarding that legislation.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Moody', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Moody
Superintendent of Schools
MSAD 54
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