



MAINE COUNSELING ASSOCIATION

A State Branch of the American Counseling Association

April 3, 2025

**Testimony in Support of LD 858
An Act to Ensure Behavioral and Mental Health Services are
Available to Students by Providing Grants to Schools
That Contract for Those Services**

Senator Joseph Rafferty, Representative Kelly Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Stan Pelletier, I am a certified school (guidance) counselor and licensed professional clinical counselor (LCPC), and have worked in Maine Schools and communities for over 25 years. I am also the Public Policy Chair for the Maine Counseling Association (MeCA), a state branch of the American Counseling Association (ACA), an organization representing professional counselors including school counselors. It is in this capacity that I express the support of the MeCA Executive Board for LD 858.

We are pleased that Maine Legislators are seriously considering ways to support the mental/behavioral well-being of students and families by allocating resources to support unmet needs of students in Maine schools. To say that Maine children have gone through a lot in the last few years is an understatement. Levels of reported anxiety, depression and suicidality are at historically high levels and rising. Education professionals, counselors, and social workers are facing this tide every day. We believe that all efforts to improve the mental health and well-being of Maine children should be considered, including augmenting funding to schools for hiring school counselors, social workers and clinicians and allocating grant resources to contract for behavioral, mental health, and clinical services with trained mental health professionals.

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President – Sarah Fucillo

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In closing, let me say that we welcome thoughtful attempts by the legislature to assist educators and school-based mental health professionals in carrying out their vital functions in service to students and families in Maine schools. We, the members of the Executive Board of the Maine Counseling Association, are ready to assist and consult with members of the legislature if called upon. We are committed as an organization to upholding the standards of practice of counseling professionals in service to Maine students, families, and schools. Thank you for your time and attention, and for the opportunity to share our views with the membership of the Joint Standing Committee.

Best regards,

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