

April 7, 2025

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Patti Forster, and I have dedicated 32 years to teaching English in public schools, the past 12 at Camden Hills Regional High School. In addition to my teaching role, I serve as the president of the Maine Council for English Language Arts. I am also the 2021 Knox County Teacher of the Year, a 2022 Maine State Teacher of the Year Finalist, and a 2020 Maine State English Teacher. This letter is to express my strong support for LD 1404, which proposes the creation of a working group to assess the status of school and public libraries in Maine.

Libraries are foundational to our educational system, serving as the center of knowledge, resources, and community engagement in our schools and our towns. In Maine, we are fortunate to have libraries in most towns that cater to the varied needs of our residents. According to data, there are at least 163 libraries in Maine, collectively employing 601 individuals and generating over \$53 million in annual revenue. [Cause IO: Intelligence on nonprofits](#)

Maine also has over 1,600 public schools and almost 2,000 private schools, most with school libraries serving over 190,000 students. There are also 30 accredited colleges with libraries serving an estimated 21,385 students. School libraries play a pivotal role in supporting student learning and fostering a love for reading. They provide access to a wide range of resources that complement classroom instruction and encourage independent exploration. Successful school libraries function as the hub of their schools, creating a safe space not only for reading and studying but for connection, too. Public town libraries, on the other hand, serve as community centers, offering programs and resources for individuals of all ages.

Despite their importance, libraries face challenges related to funding, resource allocation, and evolving community needs. Establishing a working group dedicated to evaluating the current state of our libraries will allow for a comprehensive understanding of these challenges and the development of strategies to address them. Such an initiative will ensure that our libraries continue to serve as vital educational and community resources, adapting to the changing needs of our population.

I urge this committee to support the creation of this working group, as it represents a proactive step toward strengthening the infrastructure that supports education and community engagement across Maine. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Patti Forster  
Camden Hills Regional High School  
President, Maine Council for English Language Arts