

**LD 363 An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Create the
School Capital Improvement Fund**

Penelope (Penny) Jordan
Cape Elizabeth Town Council Chair
(207) 671-5341

Cape Elizabeth, ME

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the committee I am Penny Jordan, Chair of the Cape Elizabeth Town Council. I am here to testify in full support of LD 363.

I want to say right up front – a bill such as this is long overdue as towns across Maine grapple with aging schools. Grants that fund portions of school construction and renovation projects will help many communities. Whether it be to offset a new gym, additional classrooms or to redesign space to create 21st century learning environments.

I am sure you hear from many communities about the financial challenges experienced to upgrade or replace their aging schools. Many of these schools were built to accommodate the baby boomers, some are even older.

In November 2022 a \$115 million bond for new schools was voted down in Cape Elizabeth. In November 2024 a \$94.7 million project was voted down. In both instances it was the resulting tax impact that was voiced as the cause. This bill would allow grants to fund a portion of a project and could result in projects moving forward and help lessen the impact on property owners.

In June we will vote for the third time to fund the construction of a new middle school and renovations to our elementary schools at a cost of \$89.5 million, resulting in a 12.3% tax increase. It would be ideal if there was a way to access funding to offset a portion of the cost and the resulting impact.

You often hear people say it's the teachers not the buildings that create a strong school system. I do agree teachers are key to the programs, but the environment in which children learn is important as well. Facilities that align with the work environment young people will eventually work in – places for teams, collaboration and interaction. Our aging schools need to build toward this vision.

Thank you and ask that you pass this bill and send the request for a bond issue along to the voters across Maine.