

Testimony for LD 1624 - An Act to Provide Funding for Summer School Programming
Submitted by Xavier E. Botana
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Honorable Senator Rafferty and Honorable Representative Kelly and members of the Joint Educational and Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Xavier Botana. I am a resident of Portland and retired school administrator and educator. I am writing to recommend that LD 1624 ought to pass.

I advocate for the crucial funding of summer school programs, an investment that stands to profoundly benefit our students and, by extension, our society. The research supporting the efficacy of summer school programming is both robust and compelling. Studies have consistently shown that summer learning programs can significantly mitigate the "summer slide," the well-documented phenomenon where students lose academic ground during the summer months. This is particularly true for students from low-income backgrounds, who may not have access to enriching summer activities that their more affluent peers enjoy.

Furthermore, recent research highlights the pivotal role that summer school plays in addressing the academic setbacks exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of its longstanding research a study of several programs by the RAND Corporation suggests that the most effective summer programs run for at least five weeks, preferably six, and provide at least three hours a day of academic instruction—a standard few districts currently meet. Students who attend at least 80 percent of the summer classes and return in subsequent summers achieve the best results.

This data speaks not only for the value of summer programming, but also the importance of predictability and staying power for these programs. Specifically, the Rand study showed that successful programs offer targeted instruction tailored to the needs of students, providing them with the opportunity to catch up and even excel in their academic journey. Additionally, many successful programs combine academic with enrichment activities, often in partnership with community organizations.

However, we face an urgent challenge: the disappearance of federal funding that was previously allocated to help students recover from pandemic-related academic losses. This funding gap threatens to widen educational disparities and undermine the progress we have made. Without continued support, many school districts will struggle to maintain, let alone expand, their summer offerings, leaving countless students without the resources they need to succeed.

By passing this bill to fund summer school programs, we are not only investing in the academic success of our students but also in the economic and social future of our communities. The benefits of such an investment are clear: improved academic outcomes, reduced achievement gaps, and a more equitable education system for all. I urge you to consider the overwhelming evidence and the pressing need, and to support this LD 1624 for the betterment of the State of Maine.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposed LD and your service to the State of Maine.