

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 1466

### AN ACT RELATED TO EXCUSING A SCHOOL FROM MAKING UP MISSED DAYS WHEN IT CANNOT OPERATE DURING A DECLARED STATE OF EMERGENCY

April 25, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Eileen King, Deputy Executive Director of the Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association in support of L.D. 1466, which provides clarity and flexibility for school districts that are unable to operate during a declared state of emergency.

L.D. 1466 would allow the Commissioner of Education to reduce or waive the requirement to make up instructional days if a school is closed due to a Governor-declared emergency.

The winter of 2023–2024 brought this issue into sharp focus. In December 2023, two powerful coastal storms caused widespread power outages, flooding, and road closures, forcing many schools to close for multiple days. In one southern Maine community, a flooded bridge cut off access to a K-8 school for over a week, making transportation impossible. In another district in the western mountains, high winds brought down trees and power lines, leaving school buildings without heat or electricity. In Hancock County, flash flooding and road washouts not only closed schools but created hazardous conditions for buses and staff. All these areas were included in the Governor’s emergency declaration.

These closures were not due to a lack of preparation or planning by school leaders—they were the result of extraordinary and uncontrollable circumstances. Yet, under current law, schools are still technically required to make up those lost days. While waivers may be requested, they are quite often denied due to weather events.

L.D. 1466 rightly recognizes that if a state of emergency is declared and a school cannot operate as a direct result, requiring those days to be made up is counterproductive as it already adds to other make up days that are the result of snow days. The bill also directs the Department of Education to streamline its procedures and eliminate unnecessary paperwork in these situations, which is greatly appreciated.

Our associations support this bill because it provides clarity, reduces administrative burden, and acknowledges the realities faced by school systems during natural disasters and other emergencies. We urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” on L.D. 1466.