

MAINE

PRINCIPALS'

ASSOCIATION



**50 Industrial Drive
Augusta, Maine 04330
(207) 622-0217**

Email: mpa@mpa.cc

Websites:

**<https://mpaprof.org>
<https://mpa.cc>**

Kimberly Liscomb
Cony Middle/High
School
President

Stephen Bell
Dexter Regional High
School
President-elect

Michael R. Burnham
Executive Director
Interscholastic Division

Holly D. Blair
Executive Director
Professional Division

Michael G. Bisson
Assistant Director

MPA is an Equal
Opportunity Organization

TO: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
FROM: Maine Principals' Association Legislative Committee
RE: In Support of LD 1579: An Act to Abolish School Budget Referenda
DATE: April 30, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Dr. Holly Blair, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Principals' Association – Professional Division. The MPA represents more than 700 PreK-12 principals and assistant principals, CTE Directors and Assistant Directors, and Athletic Directors of public and private schools in Maine.

The MPA Legislative Committee is in support of LD 1579.

Under the current system, communities are only given the option to vote for or against a proposed school budget through referendum. While this may seem to promote direct public input, it comes with several unintended consequences. One major concern is that voters who oppose a budget may do so for very different reasons—some because they believe it is too high, and others because they believe it is too low. Yet the outcome is the same: rejection, and in some communities, no way to indicate the direction in which the budget should be adjusted.

When a budget is rejected, the district must repeat the referendum process, which is time-consuming, costly, and often disruptive to school operations. In some cases, this delay can result in uncertainty for staffing, programming, and resource planning—ultimately affecting students.

Several communities have already moved away from referenda and returned to a model in which the elected school board or municipal council—representatives chosen by the people—approve the school budget. These systems provide a more deliberative and efficient process, while still ensuring local accountability.

For these reasons, we support LD 1579 and encourage the Committee to vote Ought to Pass.

Please note that this testimony was submitted based off of the original bill and not additional amendments that may be presented.