



Maine Education Association

Jesse Hargrove President | Beth French Vice President | Jaye Rich Treasurer
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Testimony

Neither For Nor Against

LD 673: An Act to Better Support the Educational Attainment of Low-income and Moderate-income Communities by Providing Additional Funding to Certain School Administrative Units

LD 933: An Act to Increase to 100 Percent the State Share of Funding for Special Education Costs of All School Administrative Units

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Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

April 29th, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Jan Kosinski, and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Maine Education Association (MEA). The MEA represents nearly 24,000 educators, including teachers and other educators in nearly every public school in the state, as well as full-time faculty and other professional and support staff in both the University of Maine and Community College systems. Thousands of retired educators continue their connection and advocacy work through the MEA- Retired program.

I offer this testimony today on behalf of the MEA **NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST** LD 673, *An Act to Better Support the Educational Attainment of Low-income and Moderate-income Communities by Providing Additional Funding to Certain School Administrative Units* and LD 933, *An Act to Increase to 100 Percent the State Share of Funding for Special Education Costs of All School Administrative Units*.

Throughout this session, the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) has provided insightful and thoughtful analysis of our state's school funding formula to this Committee. The final report, due soon, is the result of the passage last year of LD 2286, *Resolve, Directing the Maine Education Policy Research Institute to Review Certain Components of General Purpose Aid for Local Schools and the Essential Programs and Services Funding Formula*.¹ That Resolve reflected several years of work by this Committee to better understand the Essential Programs and Services (EPS) funding formula and raised several important questions that the knowledgeable staff of MEPRI have interrogated and analyzed. And MEPRI continues to provide ongoing reports to this Committee to share with you all and the public their findings and recommendations.

The funding formula is critical for public education in Maine. It is connected to our entire PreK- 12 system, supports the education of over 170,000 students and our state, and indirectly impacts the wages and working conditions of every single educator in our state. The work is integral, even if the formula is mind-blowingly complicated. This Committee regularly spends hours both on understanding the formula and how it works, and ways to make it better. The Resolve passed last year attempts to grapple with a few of the major issues that have

¹ Please see, LD 2286, *Resolve, Directing the Maine Education Policy Research Institute to Review Certain Components of General Purpose Aid for Local Schools and the Essential Programs and Services Funding Formula*. found here: [getDocument.aspx](#)



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haunted the formula for years. Namely, the study asked MEPRI to interrogate and analyze the funding formula's treatment of special education costs, local ability to pay, and regional labor market adjustments.

On each of those subjects, MEPRI has already provided a thoughtful analysis and has foreshadowed additional solutions to come in their report. The state is now spending over \$1.2 billion per year in General Purposed Aid (GPA) to schools. It is only prudent to make sure the state is careful and intentional in the distribution of these funds, and that responsibility starts with this Committee.

Both bills address elements currently under review by MEPRI. LD 673 attempts to dedicate additional state funding to low-income communities, and given the MEPRI analysis, the state's funding formula clearly must find a way to address the formula's impact on low income, high property value communities. LD 933 addresses the special education costs for school districts and this Committee has had a briefing on that subject from MEPRI as well, and I get the impression many of you agree the funding formula needs to be retooled to address the way the state funds special education services. (Neither of these bills touch on the regional labor market adjustments, which was a third area of study for MEPRI. Here too the funding formula should be amended to address the way the current formula locks in low salaries based on an outdated metric from twenty years ago.)

The work MEPRI has done is important and insightful, but we realize the Committee may not be able to develop agreed upon recommendations before statutory adjournment this year. We also know that the Committee and the Legislature is unlikely to make changes to the school funding formula after 279s have been distributed because it will create budgetary chaos for districts. The school budget process can be lengthy and cumbersome, and districts often need and want continuity and stability. Changes during the budget process, especially changes that creates winners and losers, will create frustration from school board members, educators and community leaders tasked with constructed school budgets. Given this, we advise against any changes to the school funding formula for the 25/26 school year.

Instead, we encourage the Committee to consider these topics as part of work for the Committee after the session. If possible, we would encourage the Committee to spend time either in January and February of next year, or even through the Fall and Winter, with an eye towards making changes for the 27/28 school year. Once the 279s are published in January of February of 2026, I suspect, there will be concern about changes for the 26/27 school year. This is always a challenge with funding formula changes –they take years to enact if you want to avoid mid budget changes. Since the Committee has the authority to report out a bill based on LD 2286 legislation, we believe these bills are unnecessary but we hope the Committee will consider elements of each or the subjects they touch upon as part of Committee-initiated legislation to enact proposed changes based on the MEPRI study.

Thank you for your time and attention and I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.