

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 1716

AN ACT TO REQUIRE FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION TO INCLUDE A HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

April 30, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Steven Bailey, the Executive Director of the Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 1716.

MSBA and MSSA have consistently opposed legislative efforts to impose curriculum mandates from the Legislature. Curriculum decisions should remain under the purview of local school boards and educational professionals who are best positioned to understand the needs of their students and communities.

Reproductive health and human development are already embedded within Maine's **Health Education Learning Results**. These standards are carefully crafted by educators and health professionals to be age-appropriate and developmentally aligned. Examples include:

- **Grades K–2:** Students “identify basic body parts and their functions” and “demonstrate ways to express emotions appropriately.”
- **Grades 3–5:** Students “describe the physical, social, and emotional changes that occur during puberty” and “demonstrate effective refusal and negotiation skills to avoid risky behaviors.”
- **Grades 6–8:** Students “describe the male and female reproductive systems and their functions” and “explain the benefits of abstinence and ways to prevent pregnancy and STDs.”
- **Grades 9–12:** Students “evaluate the effectiveness of abstinence, condoms, and other contraceptives in preventing pregnancy and STDs,” and “analyze the responsibilities of parenthood and the skills required to be a responsible parent.”

These standards are reviewed and revised through established, evidence-based processes. L.D. 1716 circumvents this process and imposes specific, prescriptive requirements that are not aligned with the principles of health education best practice or child development.

L.D. 1716 requires that detailed visual content on fetal development be shown to children as young as 8 years old. This mandate undermines the professional judgment of educators and school health providers who are trained to present sensitive content in a manner that is age-appropriate and culturally responsive. Requiring schools to include high-definition ultrasound and fertilization videos in early grades is an inappropriate instructional approach.

This bill creates a new cause of action under state law, authorizing the Attorney General to sue schools for perceived noncompliance. Our associations do not think that the Attorney General is the expert in selecting instructional strategies and possessing the expertise to evaluate the sound judgment of our educational professionals.

What is as concerning as all the prescriptive approaches outlined in this bill is the complete lack of attention to parental involvement in deciding when, how, and what is taught regarding human growth and development. Parents play a critical role in their children's education, particularly on sensitive topics such as reproductive health. L.D. 1716 effectively sidelines parents from participating in decisions that deeply impact their children's learning and well-being.

L.D. 1716 is an unnecessary and intrusive mandate that disregards the curriculum development process already in place in Maine. The Maine Learning Results already include comprehensive, age-appropriate reproductive health education, and our educators are equipped to teach these topics with sensitivity and professionalism.

We urge the Committee to respect local control, the expertise of our educators, the input from our children's parents and existing state standards by voting **Ought Not to Pass** on L.D. 1716.