

April 30, 2025

*Testimony of Kamil Sylvain*

**LD 1579, An Act to Abolish School Budget Referenda**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*

Dear Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Kamil, and I am a resident of Lewiston, a homeowner, a real estate investor, a taxpayer, and an engaged voter. I am writing to express my strong support for LD 1579, An Act to Abolish School Budget Referenda.

As someone who invests in my community, I understand that a portion of my property taxes is allocated to fund our local school systems. This investment is essential and beneficial. Well-funded schools operate more effectively and efficiently, leading to improved quality and rankings. This, in turn, positively impacts property values, neighborhood safety, and, most importantly, the success of our children. As a taxpayer, I believe I speak for many when I say that I fully support using our taxes to enhance our local schools, and I take pride in contributing to their success.

From my understanding, the school budget already undergoes a rigorous process that begins with the school administration, moves through the school board, is reviewed by the city council, and then returns to the school administration. Following this extensive process, voters are given the opportunity to approve or reject the budget.

However, as a voter, I recognize that many of us tend to participate primarily in major elections where we select our representatives at the federal, state, and local levels. When it comes to specific votes like school budget referenda, voter turnout is often low. Many may be unaware that a vote is taking place, unable to attend, or may simply defer to those who have crafted the

budget. Consequently, turnout is frequently insufficient. Moreover, those who do vote may not have a comprehensive understanding of the proposed budget, how it was determined, or how the funds will be allocated. We often do not have the same level of insight into the needs of our schools and city budgets as the representatives we elect.

When a budget is rejected, it must go through this lengthy process again, consuming valuable time and resources—resources that could have been directed to our schools. This inefficiency ultimately jeopardizes the funding necessary for our students and educational programs.

For these reasons, as a voter and taxpayer, I wholeheartedly support LD 1579 and advocate for the abolition of school budget referenda or, at the very least, amendments that streamline the process to make it more efficient and cost-effective.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Kamil

Lewiston Resident

Kamil Sylvain  
Lewiston  
LD 1579

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From my understanding, the school budget already undergoes a rigorous process that begins with the school administration, moves through the school board, is reviewed by the city council, and then returns to the school administration. Following this extensive process, voters are given the opportunity to approve or reject the budget.

However, I recognize that every municipality is different, and each has its own procedures. As it stands, the state requirement for the school budget validation referendum is mandated and prohibits municipalities from opting out or making adjustments that could lead to a more efficient process. While the intention behind these mandated referendums is to allow taxpayers to participate in the budgeting process, I believe that meaningful participation occurs during city council and school board hearings or within specially formed committees of administrators and concerned citizens. The referendum votes offer a simplistic “yes or no” choice on passing the budget, lacking the nuance needed to understand what is actually being opposed.

For example, if I wanted to see an increase in spending for certain aspects of the budget, casting a “no” vote would not convey that desire. Instead, it would likely result in budget cuts, which is not the outcome I, or many others, would prefer.

As a voter, I also recognize that many of us tend to participate primarily in major elections where we select our representatives at the federal, state, and local levels. When it comes to specific votes like school budget referendums, voter turnout is often low. Many may be unaware that a vote is taking place, unable to attend, or may simply defer to those who have crafted the budget. Consequently, turnout is frequently insufficient. Moreover, those who do vote may not have a comprehensive understanding of the proposed budget, how it was determined, or how the funds will be allocated. We often do not have the same level of insight into the needs of our schools and city budgets as the representatives we elect.

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