



STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
23 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

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May 1, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Senate Chair  
Representative Murphy, House Chair  
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 1753, An Act to Establish the Upper St. John Valley Recovery High School Program which proposes to establish a 3-year pilot program for the development of a high school program designed to educate students in recovery from substance use disorders or co-occurring disorders. The Maine Department of Education (DOE) appreciates the understanding that a unique solution is needed to address the devastating effects of addiction on Maine students. The wrap-around supports this bill proposes to provide to students are an acknowledgement of the aspirations these students hold and the specialized support they may need to achieve them.

On the whole, the DOE is unclear as to the necessity or purpose of this bill. Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A §3801 authorizes education service centers to establish and administer education programs. As such, establishing a program in statute is an unnecessary step. Further, the DOE does not have the authority or capacity to establish, oversee, support, or manage specialized education programs established by School Administrative Units or Education Service Centers.

It is our understanding that the funding for this pilot is largely secured. The Maine Recovery Council has dedicated the funding for the first two years of the pilot program. The Upper St. John valley Education Service Center has applied to the Attorney General for funding for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year. The funding from both the Maine Recovery Council and the Attorney General are from the opioid settlement fund. In general, when funding is available through previously established grant programs, there is not a need for statutory support for the recipients.

Further, the Department has questions and concerns about the implementation of the program. The processes for student placement and tuition agreement are unclear. Supporting specialized curriculum development for a recovery program is outside the current capacity and expertise of the Department staff.

The Upper St. John Valley Recovery High School Program addresses a specialized need for students in Maine. Despite this need, we are unclear as to the purpose of the bill and have unanswered questions. The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 1753 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

*Page Nichols*

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Chief Innovation Officer