

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 1593

AN ACT TO REQUIRE CERTAIN PUBLIC ENTITIES TO DEFINE THEIR USE OF THE TERM “EQUITY”

May 5, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and esteemed members of the State and Local Government 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 Superintendents Association and the Maine School Boards Association in opposition to L.D. 1593, An Act to Require Certain Public Entities to Define Their Use of the Term “Equity.” Maine school leaders believe this bill will only add an additional, unnecessary burden onto Maine school districts – adding unneeded work at a time when resources are already scarce.

The term “equity” is a longstanding, deeply engrained part of public education. Both MSSA and MSBA have used the term for decades. One of MSSA’s primary goals is to provide “*equity, creates opportunities for and promotes the success of every student.*” In MSBA’s document of beliefs and resolutions, it specifically highlights equity in education: “*All students, regardless of their race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ancestry, national origin, disability, age or economic status deserve equitable opportunities and support to learn in Maine’s public schools.*”

This manifests itself across education: Maine school leaders strive for all students to attend school each day, achieve in the classroom, graduate on time, and have success in post-secondary careers. Achieving these goals requires equity in the support and resources we provide to our children – that is why, when Maine’s EPS School Funding Formula was created more than two decades ago, its goal was improving equity of funding across all Maine school districts – ensuring all students, no matter the district, can succeed.

This goal is at the forefront of nearly every decision schools make. Yet L.D. 1593 would require that, when a school district takes any action, it would need to “specify and make available on its publicly accessible website the definition of “equity” that the public entity or educational institution is using to make that decision and the metrics being used to measure equity.”

Schools are already held to high standards and regularly report achievement scores, attendance data, behavior information, graduation data, and more. We believe this is already sufficient. In addition, local school boards hold transparent, open discussions as they adopt new policies, in full open view of the public – providing ample opportunity for public input. If a local community requests additional information about a particular policy a school district will provide it.

Mandating new requirements in these processes will not provide any additional transparency or insight but simply waste valuable taxpayer resources on unnecessary duties. For these reasons, we urge your committee to reject L.D. 1593.