

## TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 587

### AN ACT TO REQUIRE CARDIAC EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANS AND ATHLETIC EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS FOR SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL-SPONSORED ATHLETIC EVENTS

May 5, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs 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. 587, *An Act to Require Cardiac Emergency Response Plans and Athletic Emergency Action Plans for Schools and School-sponsored Athletic Events*.

Our associations deeply believe in ensuring safety of students at school, and on the athletic field, and we believe the requirements as outlined in L.D. 587 largely align with much of the ongoing work from Maine public schools in implementing emergency response plans to ensure students are quickly attended to in emergency situations.

When we spoke with members about L.D. 587, virtually all school districts indicated that they already worked towards these goals. Schools seek to have emergency medical equipment to deal with any cardiac emergency. Districts also work together with EMS services, law enforcement, and other community organizations to develop emergency plans similar to what is described in this bill. This is vital work that ensures that every student is safe.

The primary reason for our opposition is the potential ongoing cost of this mandate on Maine public schools that we are concerned would not be fully covered by the state. L.D. 587 allocates \$1.8 million in the 2026-2027 school year, but the language notes that certain districts would receive priority, suggesting that it may not fully cover all the costs associated with the bill:

*5. Funding. The department shall provide funding to school administrative units for the implementation of cardiac emergency response plans and athletic emergency action plans with funding priority given to schools in which at least 50% of the students are economically disadvantaged students.*

Superintendents and school board members noted examples of these costs: purchasing automatic external defibrillators (which can run several thousand dollars), ongoing costs to replace and maintain these systems, and the cost of continued staff training, each year, to ensure that all appropriate staff are knowledgeable. While we are in no position to estimate a fiscal note, we do estimate this bill would incur substantial expenses that might not be fully covered.

Some members also expressed concerns that, even if each school district does implement the plan described in L.D. 587, some may be limited by a lack of local available emergency medical services. One board member in a very rural district gave the example of having an ambulance on standby at every athletic event – while this member’s district seeks to have an ambulance nearby to deal with emergencies, sometimes that resource is simply not available. Dealing with these larger issues of adequate emergency medical services would truly address this issue and ensure that every school is prepared, and every student is safe.

If full state funding was guaranteed, our members would be more inclined to support L.D. 587. But without that assurance – and with uncertain funding locally and nationally – we oppose this measure for the time being.