



Testimony in Opposition to LD 1719:

“An Act Regarding Superintendent Agreements for Transfer Students”

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Harris Van Pate and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute. Maine Policy is a free-market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to LD 1719.

This bill proposes substantial changes to Maine’s superintendent agreement process for student transfers between school administrative units (SAUs). While the bill's stated aim is to clarify and streamline the transfer process, the practical effect of LD 1719 is to weaken the superintendent agreement system and undermine the integrity of Maine’s public school enrollment framework.

Undermining Parental Rights and Cooperative Agreements

LD 1719 imposes procedural mandates that unnecessarily encumber local decision-making. Maine parents currently have the ability to appeal superintendent decisions on student transfer requests to both the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education. This bill would weaken this appeals process by removing parents’ power to appeal to the State Board of Education in cases where both superintendents denied the original transfer request.

Additionally, it establishes the power of superintendents to appeal a decision by the Commissioner to the Board, creating new authority for superintendents to the detriment of Maine families. Lastly, it further undermines the transfer request process by applying a far more limited review standard to transfer requests denied by two superintendents, only allowing reconsideration if the superintendents strictly violated the legal process of request review.

LD 1719 erodes the principle of government balance and parental rights, and removes almost all accountability for school districts that issue abusive or arbitrary decisions.

Weakening the Transfer Framework that Ensures Equity and Accountability

Maine Policy Institute has consistently supported reforms that empower families with greater educational options, including expanded school choice, charter school



development, and open enrollment initiatives. This bill limits school choice by directly reducing the efficiency of the transfer process.

Superintendent agreements already burden families in need of school transfers, and this bill would make that process even more difficult. A more effective approach would be establishing voluntary statewide open enrollment policies while retaining strong district-to-district collaboration. It is not beneficial to Maine families to use a convoluted appeals process that pits parents against local educators, especially if we remove state administrators' oversight role.

Conclusion

LD 1719 represents an unfair reordering of a process that already lacks full fairness, accountability, and transparency, making it incredibly difficult for Maine students to transfer schools. Rather than improving access to education, it risks creating confusion, unfairness, and instability within the systems designed to support students and families.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to reject LD 1719. Thank you for your time and consideration.