

5/6/25

To: Honorable Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

From: Chris Record, Superintendent Cape Elizabeth School District

Re: Written Testimony on LD 1087, An Act An Act to Increase the State's Share of Major Capital School Construction Costs

Dear Honorable Senators and Representatives,

My name is Chris Record and I am the very proud Superintendent of the Cape Elizabeth School District. I am testifying as to the grave importance of increasing access to state funding for school construction projects throughout the state. Furthermore, I advocate strongly for changing the approach to allow for sharing the construction funds more broadly, so more communities can tackle their school construction needs.

During the 2017-2018 Rating Cycle, there were seventy-four (74) schools on the Schools Facilities Priorities list. However, only nine (9) school construction projects were awarded. Great news for those nine school districts and communities, but extremely difficult news for the remaining sixty-five (65) communities that were left to wait for the next school construction round or try to go it alone on the local level.

If the amount of school construction dollars and the model for determining who gets what amount remains the same, there will once again be a few winners and dozens and dozens of losers. As you are likely aware, there are ninety-six (96) schools that are currently being ranked through the school construction Rating Cycle conducted by Scott Brown and his MDOE team. I fear the same result will occur again with a fraction of the projects being funded by the state.

In Cape Elizabeth, we have tried the local approach by trying to pass two school construction referendums, in 2022 and 2024. Both would have required the construction costs to be paid entirely by the local taxpayers. We got close, as the 2024 referendum lost by just 166 votes.

Can you imagine this scenario instead, where the MDOE would have offered to fund the community of Cape Elizabeth 25% of the project construction costs? I believe in my heart and mind that the citizens of Cape Elizabeth want to support schools and having some portion of the project covered by state tax dollars would have led to a successful referendum. This is very likely true in multiple communities around the state.

Just imagine the positive impact for students, staff, and communities if suddenly twenty to thirty projects could be completed during the construction cycle. This would be a game changer for education in Maine.

In closing, we need more funding for school construction in Maine and we need a better way to distribute those funds to allow many more of the much needed projects to be completed. The investment in Maine kids and communities is well worth it.