

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF LD 1719

AN ACT REGARDING SUPERINTENDENT AGREEMENTS FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS

PETER THIBOUTOT

Superintendent of Schools

Winslow Public Schools

May 6, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Peter Thiboutot, Superintendent of Winslow Public Schools, testifying in strong support of the amended version of L.D. 1719, An Act Regarding Superintendent Agreements for Transfer Students.

The amended version strengthens the existing statute by clearly delineating the process all superintendents must follow when considering a superintendent agreement request. It provides a consistent framework to guide decision-making, ensuring that the needs of the student, family, and district are all carefully considered when determining where a student will attend school.

This amendment is designed to improve understanding of the request process from the parent's perspective while prioritizing the best interests of the student. It addresses the current statute's vagueness, which has led to inconsistent interpretations and practices across districts. By clarifying the process, the amendment reduces ambiguity and strengthens procedural integrity.

Once a superintendent agreement has been requested by a parent, the process outlined in the amended document requires the two superintendents involved to engage in a meaningful conversation. This discussion focuses on the student's needs, available resources, and any extenuating circumstances—factors that only those closely working with the student and family can fully understand.

The thoughtful consideration of this information is essential if we are to make the best possible decisions on behalf of students. I speak from experience—44 years as an educator, including the past 16 as a central office administrator—when I say that our region is fortunate. Most superintendents here make a concerted effort to collaborate and already follow a process similar to the one recommended in these amendments. As a result, communication among all

parties—especially with families—is stronger, and very few appeals escalate to the state board level.

As the educational landscape continues to evolve and changes in superintendency become more frequent, it is more important than ever to have a clear and consistent process in place. Such a process ensures that everyone understands the steps involved in making these critical decisions. Adopting the amended document is a key step toward preventing decisions from being influenced by personal beliefs or biases and instead keeping the focus where it belongs—on the best interests of the student.

The amended procedure clearly outlines the steps that will occur for both the superintendents and the family in the event of a disagreement. It ensures that parents have the right to appeal to the Commissioner, who would then have the opportunity to ask questions of both superintendents. This allows the Commissioner to gain a clearer understanding of each superintendent's perspective before making a decision that reflects the best interests of the student and the broader school community.

In addition, if both superintendents deny a request, the Commissioner will evaluate whether their decision was made in an arbitrary or unreasonable manner. Having this process in place reassures parents that their request has been thoroughly reviewed and that a clear, consistent protocol has been followed. If it is determined that the process was not properly followed, the denial may be overturned. This structure also maintains two levels of appeal and oversight—first at the Commissioner level and, if necessary, at the State Board level—ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the decision-making process.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Thiboutot", written in a cursive style.

Peter Thiboutot

Superintendent

Winslow Public Schools

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LD 1719

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