

Jonathan D. Moody
Superintendent of Schools

Mark P. Hatch
Assistant Superintendent

David A. Leavitt
Support Services Manager

TESTIMONY OF JONATHAN MOODY

Superintendent of Schools

MSAD #54

Canaan, Cornville, Mercer, Norridgewock, Skowhegan, Smithfield

SUBMITTED TO THE

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

AGAINST ADOPTION OF LD 1719

May 5, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education Committee, I am Jonathan Moody, Superintendent of Schools in MSAD 54, serving the towns of Canaan, Cornville, Mercer, Norridgewock, Skowhegan and Smithfield. I write to you in support of LD 1719.

I've had the opportunity to spend the last 27 years in public education, the last 5 of which have been as Superintendent of Schools in MSAD 54. Recently I have been fortunate to serve as the MSSA / MSMA liaison for the Maine State Board of Education, which means I'm the representative for Superintendents and our School Districts with the State Board. I believe the proposed amended language of LD 1719 makes important adjustments to statute that will benefit our students, their families, and our school districts throughout the state. I've summarized the benefits below.

The proposed amended language of LD 1719 is the only language/bill endorsed by the State Board of Education; the group of individuals charged with reviewing transfer appeals in the state. This point is significant, and it's one that I hope will be considered by the committee.

Superintendents are by no means perfect, but as a group we strive to provide all our students with the highest quality education possible. We balance the needs of our schools, our communities, and our taxpayers. The job is challenging but incredibly rewarding. MSSA, the Association that represents school superintendents state-wide, supports the proposed amended language of LD 1719 because we believe it is best for our communities, our schools, and our students.

Student Transfers are far more common than you would expect. The Department of Education recently shared that just under 4000 agreements were approved last year, with only 29 being appealed to the State Board. My district is a good example of the balance Superintendents attempt to strike as we have had 125 requests this year - 106 requests were approved (71 to our district, 35 to other districts), and 19 were denied (15%). Requests are relatively common and Superintendents endeavor to make determinations that represent the best needs of all students.

The proposed amended language of LD 1719 brings greater consistency to the student transfer process. This new language establishes a clearer process and timeline (30 days from receipt of an agreement request) and specifies that a Superintendent may not cite a student's residence as the sole basis for denial. Additionally, LD 1719 clarifies finer points in the process including superintendent communication (who contacts who), and when an agreement should be considered for the following year (beginning April 15th). These combined adjustments bring significant clarity and consistency to a process that has not always been consistent between districts across the state.

State law indicates that students should go to public school in the school District where they reside. This makes sense for a lot of reasons, including equity and school funding. The law also provides a means by which students can attend other districts provided it is in their best interest. The proposed amended language in LD 1719 takes a positive step forward by providing clarification that "interest" should consider the interests of both the requesting student as well as the requested school district. The proposed language requires Superintendents to consider whether or not it is in the student's and school community's best interests and to provide that determination to the parent within a reasonable period of time.

Superintendents across the state have a challenging job to balance the diverse needs of our students, staff and communities; I believe the amended language presented for LD 1719 will positively impact students, families, and our school communities and urge you to consider its passage. Although well-intended, I believe other bills that have been proposed this legislative session would each have unintended consequences that I do not believe would be best for our students or schools. As I shared, Superintendent agreements regularly occur when they are in the best interest of the student and the school community. I urge the committee to consider LD 1719 which is the only bill supported by the State Board of Education, the very public servants charged with overseeing the transfer appeals process.

Thank you,



Jonathan Moody

Superintendent of Schools

MSAD 54

Canaan, Cornville, Mercer, Norridgewock, Skowhegan, Smithfield