



## Maine Education Association

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### **Testimony Neither For nor Against LD 1887, Resolve, To Improve Air Quality and Ventilation in Newly Constructed Schools May 9, 2025**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Jan Kosinski, and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Maine Education Association (MEA). The MEA represents nearly 24,000 educators, including teachers and other educators in nearly every public school in the state, as well as full-time faculty and other professional and support staff in both the University of Maine and Community College systems. Thousands of retired educators continue their connection and advocacy work through the MEA- Retired program.

I offer this testimony today on behalf of the MEA **NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST** LD 1887, *Resolve, To Improve Air Quality and Ventilation in Newly Constructed Schools*.

As I have already testified before this Committee, the MEA is very concerned about the capital needs of our schools and as we learned during the COVID pandemic, air quality is a chief concern of schools as we seek to keep students healthy and safe while they are engaged in classroom activities. Yet, with the incredibly old stock of public schools in our state and limited capital funding for improvements, many students attend schools with very poor air quality. MEA members report to us that the windows in their classrooms may not open, thus leaving the easiest way to improve air quality out of reach in some classrooms.

The issue of air quality in our schools was raised by a former member of this Committee, Rebecca Millett, when she sponsored LD 705, *Resolve, To Improve Air Quality and Ventilation in Maine's Public Schools* during the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session. This final Resolve required the State Board of Education and the Department of Education to revise the basic approval standards for schools “to require standards governing air quality and ventilation for all public schools, including schools with mechanical and nonmechanical ventilation systems. These standards must apply to all public schools and must apply no earlier than July 1, 2022 and no later than July 1, 2026.” This Resolve required the Department of Education and the State Board of Education to revise the following rules: Chapter 60: New School Siting Approval, Chapter 61: State Board of Education Rules for Major Capital School Construction Projects and Chapter 125: Basic Approval Standards: Public Schools and School Administrative Units. As you can read, the intent was to require better air quality standards in new projects (Chapter 60 and 61) but also for all schools (Chapter 125). LD 705 was passed by the Legislature in 2021 and became law without the Governor’s signature.

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The proposed rule changes then came to this Committee as part of LD 1935 in 2022. Peter Geiger, a member of the State Board at the time, offered testimony in support of these changes and his testimony stated the following: “The continuing COVID-19 pandemic, combined with a longstanding funding shortfall in meeting the needs of the State’s ageing physical plants, has heightened the urgency of focusing our attention on air quality and ventilation in this important area of our school infrastructure. LD 1935 represents an important initiative to respond to the broad and significant statewide issue of the safety of the air quality in our students’ learning environments . . . A healthy physical environment is essential to providing the best quality educational experience and to the general health of our youth. We urge your support for L.D. 1935.”<sup>1</sup>

LD 1935 was passed by the House with 2/3rds support under the gavel, but the Senate did not take final action, and that bill died on adjournment. However, since the rule changes were properly submitted and because the Legislature failed to take final action, the rule changes were adopted and included in all three rules.

The choice before you is a difficult one. Should you choose to support this bill, you will recognize the real fiscal challenges of public schools and their inability to provide the healthy, safe learning environments students and educators deserve. If you oppose this bill and maintain the current rule, it will force schools to grapple with air quality concerns and find ways to address issues they encounter, despite these financial challenges. Obviously, I suspect no one is going to chain the schoolhouse doors shut if a school is unable to meet the air quality students spelled out in rule.

But this is also a false choice. As I have testified in prior testimony to this Committee, our state has an aging stock of schools that are not built to provide the healthy and safe schools we all want and need. To that end, rather than change the rules to continue to allow schools to operate without appropriate ventilation systems, we encourage the Committee to usher forward solutions that will provide schools with the capital funding they need to meet the intent of the current rules.

Thank you for your time and attention and I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see testimony in support of LD 1935 by Peter Geiger, State Board of Education, February 8, 2022, found here: [2/8/2022](#)