



Testimony in Support of LD 1992:

“An Act to Create a Process for the Residents of a Municipality to Withdraw from a School Union”

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and the distinguished members of the Committee On Education and Cultural Affairs, My name is Harris Van Pate, and I am a policy analyst with the Maine Policy Institute. MPI is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works to advance individual liberty and economic freedom in the state of Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1992.

Restoring local control and democratic accountability

LD 1992 addresses a clear governance gap in Maine’s education system by allowing residents of a municipality within a school union to petition and vote to withdraw, using a process that already exists for other regional school structures. This bill does not mandate withdrawal or favor any particular outcome. It simply restores a basic democratic principle: local voters should retain meaningful control over the institutions that govern their schools and tax dollars.

School unions exercise substantial authority over budgets, staffing, programming, and long-term financial commitments. Yet in many cases, individual municipalities lack a clear or practical mechanism to reconsider that arrangement if it no longer reflects local needs or preferences. LD 1992 corrects that imbalance.

Exit options strengthen—not weaken—regional cooperation

From a policy perspective, voluntary participation is a strength, not a weakness. Allowing municipalities the ability to exit a school union creates incentives for regional entities to remain responsive, cost-effective, and transparent. When participation is based on consent rather than lock-in, cooperation must be earned and maintained.

MPI generally views exit rights as a critical accountability tool in public governance. Institutions that know their members can leave have stronger incentives to manage resources responsibly and to justify centralized decisions to local taxpayers.

Neutral on outcomes, pro-choice in process

LD 1992 is procedurally focused. It does not alter funding formulas, impose new mandates, or expand state spending. Instead, it empowers local communities to evaluate whether a school union structure is working for them and to decide accordingly through a democratic vote.



This approach aligns with MPI's broader policy framework: enable choice, preserve local autonomy, and avoid one-size-fits-all solutions imposed from Augusta.

Conclusion

LD 1992 is a modest, reasonable reform that restores local decision-making authority, improves accountability in school governance, and respects the diversity of Maine's communities. For these reasons, the Maine Policy Institute urges the committee to vote Ought to Pass.

Thank you for your time and consideration.