

Kayla Vangelist

Michelle Brann

RSU 14

Raymond, ME

RE: LD 2212

Dear Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of continued funding for the Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR) framework in K-12 schools across Maine. We represent Jordan-Small Middle School in Raymond, where Michelle serves as Principal and I serve as the BARR Coordinator. Drawing on our extensive experience implementing this framework, we hope to see this opportunity extended to more Maine students.

MRS Title 20-A mandates that all school administrative units implement a system of interventions for students not meeting essential instruction or graduation requirements. However, while elementary programs receive significant Title 1 funding, secondary schools often lack similar resources, making it difficult to identify and provide necessary interventions. Consequently, student support often remains reactive rather than proactive.

The BARR framework proactively improves student achievement, attendance, and behavior in secondary schools. Rather than waiting for a student to fail, teams of trained professionals—including teachers, administrators, nurses, counselors, and psychologists—meet weekly to discuss every student. Using a structured, strengths-based approach and real-time data, these teams provide support before students fall behind. BARR also includes a curriculum focused on the whole student, covering themes such as goal setting, stress management, and community building. Building these connections is one of the most effective ways to increase student motivation and improve classroom behavior.

Jordan-Small Middle School is currently in its second full year of implementation. The results we have achieved in this short time demonstrate that the benefits of this proactive framework far outweigh the costs. We believe all Maine students deserve access to this level of support.

Over the last two years, the number of students failing one or more classes in Jordan-Small has decreased by 58%. Because of the proactive BARR model, teachers identify struggling students early and provide the specific support each one needs. Additionally, our attendance rates have increased significantly. Our Average Daily Attendance (ADA) was approximately 93% in the 2023/24 school year; so far this year, it has risen to over 95%. Students now have stronger connections to their school and peers, giving them a meaningful reason to attend.

There is a multitude of evidence supporting the BARR framework across the country. We urge you to consider the data presented today, which demonstrates the success BARR can provide for Maine students. They deserve success, and we believe this framework is essential to ensuring all our students can achieve it.

We urge you to provide the necessary funding for all BARR schools to continue this vital implementation.

Sincerely,

Kayla Vangelist Michelle Brann RSU 14 Schools