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Testimony of Rep. Marc Malon in Support of
**LD 2226, An Act to Amend the Essential Programs and Services School
Funding Formula**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Representative Marc Malon, and I have the honor of representing the people of House District 133, which is part of the great City of Biddeford. I am testifying in strong support of **LD 2226, An Act to Amend the Essential Programs and Services School Funding Formula**.

Biddeford is why I am here today. I am a proud Biddeford native and the proud parent of two kids in Biddeford Public Schools. I am speaking on behalf of them and countless members of my community who are disadvantaged in their school experience due to the zip code they live in. Don't get me wrong – the teachers and staff in our school district are amazing. They step up and go above and beyond in their duties to educate and support our kids. But they are hamstrung in their efforts by a state school funding formula that does not provide them with adequate support.

Currently, 64.3% of students in our school district are economically disadvantaged. This is one of the highest poverty rates of any school district in Maine. The research on the challenges faced by students experiencing poverty is clear: health issues leading to higher absentee rates, food insecurity, housing instability, fewer educational resources at home and greater exposure to trauma; all of these factors negatively impact these kids' educational experiences and require greater wraparound services. Yet Biddeford, despite its high poverty rate in our schools, only receives a 37.72% state share of the costs of education, putting us \$2,166 below state average per pupil.

If the reforms presented in LD 2226 were in place today, Biddeford would see a \$468 per student gain in funding. This would be a game-changer, and not just for students experiencing poverty. When resources are stretched too thin, all students suffer for it. Without adequate resources, there simply is not enough time in the day to adequately address all students' needs, and kids risk falling behind.

I understand that the school funding formula is complex and technical, and I do not envy the task before you in working this on bill. But the bottom line for my community and for many others in Maine is that the status quo is untenable, and we have to do a better job of supporting the

children and families facing the greatest needs so that all Maine kids can get the most out of their school experience. I ask that you support this bill.