



Brad Farrin
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LD 2226, “An Act to Amend the Essential Programs and Services School Funding Formula”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
March 9, 2026

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Brad Farrin, and I represent Senate District 3, which includes the communities served by MSAD 54 in Skowhegan and MSAD 59 in Madison. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of LD 2226, “An Act to Amend the Essential Programs and Services School Funding Formula.”

I want to start by saying I appreciate the work that has gone into reviewing Maine’s Essential Programs and Services formula. It’s a complicated system, and it’s important that we take the time every so often to make sure it still reflects the realities our school districts are dealing with today. I also support the effort to include income indicators in the funding formula. Looking at things like eligibility for free and reduced-price meals helps give a clearer picture of what communities are facing. Property valuation alone doesn’t always tell the full story when it comes to a district’s ability to support its schools.

That said, one part of the proposal has a real impact on a small number of districts, including two in my district. The changes to the regional adjustment would result in a decrease in funding for MSAD 54 in Skowhegan and MSAD 59 in Madison. Based on the analysis that’s been shared, MSAD 54 could see a reduction of around \$690,000 tied to the regional adjustment change, and MSAD 59 could see a reduction of about \$148,000. For districts of that size, those are significant numbers and would be difficult to absorb all at once.

From what we’ve seen, only a small number of districts statewide would experience a reduction under this part of the proposal, while most districts would either benefit or see little change. Additionally, and this is important I think, the recommendation as presented already includes a “hold harmless” provision as it sets 1.0 as a base, lifting up most of our rural communities in the state as it should.

Because of that, I would strongly encourage the committee to consider a hold harmless provision for the districts that would otherwise see a decrease in the regional adjustment. On the basis of the way the regional adjustment proposal was made, already including a hold-harmless component for most, I believe this is the most equitable approach. If this isn’t an option, I would ask that you consider a phased-in approach that would allow the state to move forward with updating the formula while giving those few districts some stability during the transition.

My intent here isn't to push back on the broader effort to improve the EPS formula. I support that work. I just want to make sure districts like MSAD 54 and MSAD 59 aren't put in a difficult position as these changes are implemented.

Thank you for your time and consideration.