

Meredith Higgins
RSU 26
LD 2226

I am writing to share feedback regarding LD 2226, the proposed legislation to amend the school funding formula. While I agree that the current formula is overdue for reform, any shift of this magnitude inevitably creates "winners and losers" among districts. I have two primary concerns regarding the current legislation and its impact on local taxpayers and students.

Concern 1: The Gap Between Formula Assumptions and Actual Inflationary Costs
The current formula's underlying assumptions regarding the cost of education have not kept pace with the rapid escalation of costs for wages, benefits, and services. While the state may technically meet the 55% funding threshold on paper, that percentage is applied to a baseline that is far below the actual market costs districts face.

LD 2226 proposes adding \$39 million in state funding, but this remains insufficient to bridge the gap. Without adequate funding for the actual costs of education in 2026, these changes merely shift a systemic deficit from one set of districts to another. To mitigate this, I urge the legislature to enact a "hold harmless" provision for the next biennial budget. This would prevent a sudden, loss of funds for districts negatively affected by the new formula as they transition.

Concern 2: Lack of Transparency in Special Education Funding Changes
Following the presentation by MEPRI and MDOE to Superintendents on March 5th, I am deeply concerned about the proposed changes to Special Education funding. Unlike other components of the bill, the Special Education elements lack detailed simulations or specific language to illustrate their impact.

Districts rely on these funds to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Altering this formula without clear modeling is a significant risk to our most vulnerable students. I strongly advocate that the Special Education changes be put on hold for further study until districts can fully understand and respond to the potential impact.

Thank you for your consideration of these complex issues and for your commitment to Maine's students.