



**MAINE SMALL SCHOOLS COALITION**  
*“Advocating for Rural and Community Schools”*

*2025-2026 Officers*

*President – Kenneth Johnson RSU 37 Superintendent of Schools*

*Secretary – Fern Desjardins*

March 6, 2026

Members of the Education and Cultural Affair Committee:

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Kenneth Johnson, Superintendent of Schools for RSU 37, and I am the new President of the Maine Small Schools Coalition.

On behalf of both organizations, I strongly urge you to support the recommended changes to the EPS formula set forth in LD 2226. Raising the labor market index for all SAUs to a level of least 1.0 ensures that schools receive the correct subsidy for the salaries they expend. While the state minimum salary for teachers and ed techs has risen significantly, the need to revisit the labor market index is greatly overdue.

Additionally, I also strongly urge you to support the recommended changes to include free and reduced lunch percentage as an indicator of poverty when reflecting a town’s ability to pay. The recent rise in property valuations around the state is well documented and is something that affects both large and small districts alike. Relying on one measure of wealth, property valuations, has led to great inequities around the state with many locations experiencing high property valuations that don’t reflect the scarcity of jobs, the lack of businesses or commercial property, or the loss of population.

Finally, as an educator of now 30 years of experience, I cannot overstate the impact poverty has had on the student population. The additional funds that the vast majority of SAU’s would receive if the second recommendation regarding a town’s ability to pay were implemented, could be used to provide alternative programs, more robust after-school programs, tutoring, and counseling services all of which would greatly benefit the students who need it desperately.

While poverty rates do vary across the state, combating poverty should be one of our highest priorities regardless of whether a person lives in an affluent community or one of our many communities that are struggling under in current economic climate.

Submitted Respectfully,

Kenneth Johnson  
President, Maine Small Schools Coalition  
Superintendent of Schools RSU 37