

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
LD 2226: An Act to Amend the Essential Programs and Services Funding Formula
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
132nd Maine Legislature

Submitted by:
Howard Tuttle, Superintendent
RSU 12 (Alna, Chelsea, Palermo, Somerville, Westport Island, Windsor, and Whitefield)

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Howard Tuttle, and I am the Superintendent of RSU 12. I am testifying today to offer my support for LD 2226.

RSU 12 serves the communities of Alna, Chelsea, Palermo, Somerville, Westport Island, Windsor, and Whitefield. These are rural communities with significant and genuine economic need. And yet, property values across our district have risen sharply in recent years, outpacing the statewide average. On paper, RSU 12 looks wealthier than it has ever been. In reality, the families we serve are not.

This is the fundamental unfairness at the heart of Maine's current school funding formula. When a formula is built primarily on property values, it cannot accurately reflect the true needs of a community. Property values are not the same as family income. Property values are not the same as a community's ability to pay. In RSU 12, we have a district full of people living on land that has become valuable while their economic circumstances have not changed. The formula does not see that. It sees the assessed value and draws the wrong conclusions.

The result is that RSU 12 is treated as more financially capable than we are. We are asked to contribute at a level that does not reflect the reality our families face. And because the formula has gone without a meaningful update for so long, this unfairness has been compounding quietly for years. The recent surge in property values has simply made it impossible to ignore any longer.

Districts like RSU 12 are making real cuts right now because of this structural unfairness. We are not making cuts because we are inefficient or because we have failed to plan. We are making cuts because the formula is broken and has been for a long time. Our students and our communities cannot afford for this Legislature to leave that formula in place any longer.

LD 2226 takes a meaningful step toward correcting this. By incorporating community income into the formula alongside property value, it moves Maine closer to a system that reflects what communities can actually bear and what students actually need. That is a change that is long overdue, and I urge this Committee to support it.

Thank you.

Howard Tuttle
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