

# EDUCATE MAINE



TESTIMONY BY JASON JUDD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EDUCATE MAINE  
TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026, 10:00 A.M.

## FOR

L.D. 2226: “An Act to Amend the Essential Programs and Services School Funding Formula”

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Jason Judd, Executive Director of Educate Maine. Our organization is a business-led education organization focused on championing career readiness and increasing education attainment so that every learner can thrive in postsecondary education and the workforce. I am here today to testify in support of L.D. 2226.

I want to applaud the work of the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI), the Maine Department of Education, this committee, and others for the important work that has been undertaken to analyze the school funding formula and recommend particular improvements. The EPS funding formula has not gone through meaningful changes in more than a decade despite significant changes with the needs of students and schools. The proposed bill addresses a variety of improvements to the EPS funding formula including updating the calculation of the regional adjustment, changes to transportation costs, includes an income indicator for the local contribution to the cost of education, and changes to special education costs. I encourage the committee to support this bill.

Educate Maine publishes the Education Indicators for Maine report which highlights particular education indicators from early childhood through adult education. An important part of this report is disaggregating the data by subgroup to better understand how students are accessing, enrolling, and persisting in education. On each of the indicators, there is a significant opportunity gap for students identified as economically disadvantaged. For example, this gap is 14 points for students in terms of completing their high school diplomas. It is 20 points for students attending postsecondary education within one year of high school graduation. One of the most important changes to the EPS school funding formula is the variable weight for students identified as economically disadvantaged. According to The Education Law Center, Maine high-poverty districts receive 15% less per-pupil than low-poverty districts placing Maine 43rd among its state peers in terms of state funding distribution. The proposed funding changes will help support districts with high-poverty rates, many of which are in rural areas of Maine.

Approving this bill will greatly support our public education system. It will modernize the formula to better meet the needs of school districts. Implementation of this bill will need to be done carefully so that communities can appropriately plan for fiscal changes. I join many of my colleagues in supporting a “hold harmless” provision for a two-year period so that school districts can adequately plan for the proposed impacts. You will also hear from a variety of district leaders about particular proposed changes to special education, transportation, and other parts of the formula today, and I encourage you to listen to the education leaders working in our schools because they know best how these changes will positively and negatively impact the work they do each day.

I strongly encourage all committee members to support this bill. It is a meaningful step forward to address fairness with the school funding formula and make adjustments based on the needs of our students, schools, and communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jason Judd".

Jason L. Judd, Ed.D.