

**Testimony in support of LD #2226:**  
**An Act to Amend the Essential Programs and Services School Funding Formula**  
**Submitted to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**  
**of the 132nd Maine Legislature, Second Regular Session**  
**March 15, 2026**

Greetings Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and honorable committee members. My name is Allison Long, and I live in Buckfield in Oxford County. I am a former public school teacher and a parent to two elementary public school students, and I serve on the Board of Directors for Regional School Unit #10. While this testimony is partially informed by my service on that school board, I am submitting this on my own behalf and not speaking officially for RSU #10 in any way.

Our school district includes seven towns in central Oxford County. According to the Maine Department of Education's ESSA dashboard, in the 2024-2025 school year, 72.4% of our students were economically disadvantaged. 30% of them had identified disabilities. We serve some of the most vulnerable students in the state of Maine, and every budget season we take more pieces of their indispensable public education away from them. All Maine kids deserve to be safe at school—physically, emotionally, socially, cognitively, and when they use technology. Having to decide which area of safety can endure the erosion of budget cuts is a crushing process to endure year after year.

Budget season is devastating. Once we receive our ED 279 report and allocate funding to all legally mandated areas of the budget, to the salary increases in negotiated contracts, to the drastic projected increase to our health insurance costs, and to ever-increasing utility costs, we face brutal decisions. Our district's state allocation simply does not keep up with these increases. Our municipal taxpayers cannot sustain the increased burden on them, and it has plunged our district into turmoil.

This struggle is reflected in the day-to-day experiences of the families in our communities. In my region of RSU #10, we struggle to keep bus drivers given the salaries we provide. Often, it is determined during the school day that due to a lack of drivers, the afternoon bus run cannot proceed as usual. When this happens, the staff tries to combine bus runs, but often that isn't possible. All of the students on the driverless bus must then find another way home from school in our three very rural towns. Families are notified sometimes less than two hours before the end of the school day, and we must scramble to find a way to get our children home from school safely. This has happened five times this school year alone.

In the fall of 2024, a year before our new school building would be ready for our students, we learned that Mountain Valley Middle School, built in 1967, had deteriorated so much that it was [no longer safe to teach and learn in](#). Our 370 students in grades 5 through 8—and the absolutely remarkable, resilient, creative staff who serve them—endured multiple weeks of remote learning as we scrambled to make a plan for where they could go. The RSU #10 staff, as we say often, “made it work,” but the kiddos ended up learning in hallways, in a converted vehicle garage, and in rented space off school grounds. MVMS students remained in these spaces for more than a year, separated from their peers in other grade levels and from many of the building staff who care so deeply for them. We are so fortunate to have been selected for the new state-funded building that they were able to move into in January; but the former building never should have reached the point that it did, putting the health of our students and staff at risk.

The above are just a few examples from our reality. This year, we began by attempting to cut three million dollars from for the upcoming fiscal year. At my children’s wonderful school of around 300 students, 61% of whom are economically disadvantaged and 25% of whom have identified disabilities, two teachers, the school counselor and the nurse are on the chopping block.

In the many conversations I have had with various stakeholders about these proposed changes, many have expressed hesitation about the special education ones. I support the further examination of those factors that special education experts have recommended already. But please approve the changes to the regional adjustment, local contributions, allocation for economically disadvantaged students, transportation costs, and instructional support.

I know that this legislation will be expensive. But there is no better investment than the students we serve here in Maine. I urge you in the strongest possible terms to accept these changes.

Allison Long  
Buckfield