

## **Testimony in Support of LD 2226, An Act to Amend the Essential Programs and Services School Funding Formula**

*March 19, 2026*

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Maura Pillsbury and I am a policy analyst at Maine Center for Economic Policy. We are testifying in support of LD 2226.

Public education is the foundation of a strong economy and a strong democracy. But for years, Maine's outdated school funding formula has led to inequities in education funding, leaving schools unable to meet the growing needs of students across the state. We commend the Committee and MEPRI for undertaking the important work of updating the formula.

MECEP supports steps this bill takes to correct these inequities, including:

- updated regional salary adjustments indexed to inflation
- increased adjustments for financially disadvantaged students
- increased supports for special education
- adding an income component to determine fiscal capacity of municipalities

We urge the Committee to consider further strengthening this bill by:

- increasing the number of counselors and social workers funded, to help address the dramatic increase in mental and behavioral health supports needed in Maine schools since the COVID-19 pandemic
- increasing supports in other key areas of need for schools, including professional development and curriculum
- adding general education subsidy for students up to 22, to reimburse schools for the cost of educating students, which is currently only reimbursed up to age 20
- adding graduated rates for economically disadvantaged students
- requiring annual review of labor market adjustments
- ensuring the impact of these changes holds districts harmless from cuts – communities will not have the ability to raise additional property taxes from only wealthier residents due to how the property tax system is structured

This bill is one step the state can take to make a greater and more equitable investment in public education. We urge the Committee to support this bill with these changes.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions. [maura@mecep.org](mailto:maura@mecep.org)