

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 98

AN ACT TO UPDATE THE SPECIAL EDUCATION LAWS

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Victoria Wallack, communications and government relations director for Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committee of the Maine School Boards Association in support of L.D. 98.

This bill, as you know, is a result of a US District Court of Appeals decision requiring Rhode Island's Board of Education to provide free and appropriate education to students with disabilities until they reach age 22.

We are in support of this bill because we believe it correctly anticipates increasing the age of eligibility will be required as a result of the Appeals Court decision.

Others testifying today will outline what will be required to implement this bill, if passed by the full Legislature, including what services exist today for these individuals, and what services will have to be added. In discussing the bill, MSBA did recognize there will be additional requirements for districts, however, feel it is the right thing to do to have the statute align with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The bill does reference that Career and Technical Education programs will be able to charge reasonable fees to those newly eligible.

One key question is will these programs have the certified staff to serve an older age group? The Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities is likely in the best position to answer that question.