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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 280

AN ACT TO MAKE MAINE SCHOOLS SAFER AND HEALTHIER BY INCREASING THE MAXIMUM DEBT SERVICE LIMIT

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Steven Bailey, executive director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association in support of L.D. 280.

Boards and superintendents support this bill but believe it doesn't go far enough.

Our recommendation is to do a complete review of the funding for major capital construction projects and lifting the \$1 million dollar cap for revolving renovation fund projects. That fund is designed to help schools address health and safety issues first in schools, overall improvements to building structures; energy and water conservation; and upgrades to learning spaces.

The list of needs is long and the current cap on funding is inadequate because we have old schools in many parts of the state.

Our understanding is there are 444 schools in Maine built prior to the 1970's. These schools all need upgrades in their facilities or need new facilities to provide for safe and healthy learning environments and to be able to provide for 21st Century learning programs.

In 2017-2018, the priority list for major capital construction included 7 schools. The next rating cycle is to be initiated in 2024. If only 14 schools are to be built every 6 years, the state of our schools will continue to deteriorate.

We need to face the reality that Maine schools are old and should be replaced or funded for renovation in order to assure our students are well served and our staff are appropriately supported in their work.

The SRRF offers funding where SAUs have identified needs in the areas of health and safety, building systems, energy and water conservation, and learning space upgrades.

The SRRF has the following priorities:

- Priority 1: Health, safety and compliance issues including roof structural upgrades; improvements to indoor air quality; compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act; hazardous material abatement or removal; and other health, safety and compliance issues.

- Priority 2: Repairs and improvements not related to health, safety and compliance limited to repairs and improvements to school building structures, windows, doors and water supply or waste disposal systems.
- Priority 3: Repairs and improvements related to energy and water conservation
- Priority 4: Upgrades of learning spaces
- Priority 5: Other projects

Superintendents support but encourage a complete review of the funding of major capital construction projects and recommend a lifting of the 1-million-dollar cap for Revolving Renovation fund projects.