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Testimony of Rep. Rebecca Millett presenting

LD 957, An Act Requiring Water Bottle Filling Stations in New and Renovated Public Schools

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and fellow members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Rebecca Millett, and I represent House District 123, which makes up most of Cape Elizabeth. Today, I'm proud to present **LD 957, An Act Requiring Water Bottle Filling Stations in New and Renovated Public Schools**.

Water is vital to our health. It plays a critical role in many of our body's functions, including carrying nutrients to cells, getting rid of wastes, protecting joints and organs, and maintaining body temperature. None of us can live without water. So it's logical that access to water is an important part of creating a healthy school environment, where all children can obtain clean drinking water at no cost and are set up for a healthy future.

Drinking water plays an important role in keeping kids healthy by helping children's muscles, joints and tissues develop properly; improving their digestion; and keeping their growing bodies hydrated. Drinking water can help children learn better; improve their short-term memory; and improve their fine motor skills and visual attention. Children who drink water instead of sugary drinks are less likely to have cavities, and drinking water instead of sugary drinks can help kids grow up at a healthy weight.¹ And it's economical – tap water is much less expensive than sports drinks, sodas and juice. Yet one in five children and adolescents do not drink any plain water during the day, and about half of school-aged children are underhydrated.²

¹ American Heart Association. Accessed March 30, 2023. www.voicesforhealthykids.org

² US CDC: Increase Access to Drinking Water in Schools. Accessed March 30, 2023. www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/features/water_access.htm

This bill requires new public schools and public schools undergoing major renovations to be equipped with water bottle filling stations and authorizes students to possess refillable water bottles.

Recently we put in place rules to help ensure testing of school drinking water for lead. Now we have an opportunity to encourage more and healthier consumption of water by putting water bottle filling stations in our schools. Unlike water fountains, water bottle filling stations don't come in contact with a person's mouth or require touching of any surfaces, making them a sanitary way for students, teachers, staff and parents to stay hydrated while in school.

Installing more bottle-filling stations would increase water consumption and also cut down on waste. I hope you will join me in supporting this legislation.