

## Maine Education Association

Grace Leavitt President | Jesse Hargrove Vice President | Beth French Treasurer  
Rebecca Cole NEA Director | Rachelle Bristol Executive Director

### Testimony

### In Support

### LD 1527: An Act to Promote the Community School Program

John Kosinski, Government Relations Director, Maine Education Association

Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

May 1, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and other esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is John Kosinski (he/him), and I am proud to serve as the Director of Government Relations for the Maine Education Association (MEA). The MEA represents 24,000 educators in the state of Maine, including teachers and other professionals in nearly every public school in the state and faculty and other professional staff in the University of Maine and Community College Systems.

I am here today to testify on behalf of the MEA in support of LD 1527, *An Act to Promote the Community School Program*.

The National Education Association and the Maine Education Association have been proponents of the Community School Model for over a decade. The Community School Model recognizes that what happens outside of the classroom impacts the learning of students inside the classroom. A student with a toothache may struggle to learn. A student facing depression or anxiety may struggle to focus in class. An overworked parent may not have the time or energy to find the enrichment programs in their community for their high-octane child. The Community School Model encourages and supports schools as they attempt to be the hub of services for students in their community. Community schools may vary in their approach. The model is purposefully designed to be locally developed and based on local needs with local voices helping to craft their own tailored plan.<sup>1</sup>

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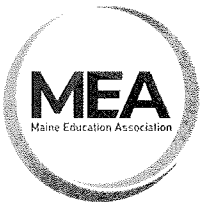
<sup>1</sup> The Maine Department of Education defines community school as:

A “Community school” is a public elementary or secondary school that:

1. Participates in a community-based effort to coordinate and integrate educational, developmental, family, health and other comprehensive services through community-based organizations and public and private partnerships; and
2. Provides access to services under paragraph A to students, families and the community, such as access during the school year to services before school hours, after school hours and during the weekend, as well as access to such services during the summer.<sup>1</sup>

Please see Maine Department of Education website, found here: [Community Schools | Department of Education \(maine.gov\)](https://www.maine.gov/education/community-schools)

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Maine has made some progress advocating for community schools, but not enough. In the current year, the funding to support the implementation of the Community Schools Model is \$250,000. LD 1527 proposes a \$2 million investment each year for the next two years. We think this is a wise investment.

The research from around the country is clear – community schools work!

In 2020, the Rand Corporation researched the implementation of community schools in New York City Schools. New York City invested in the Community Schools Model in 2014, and the study by the Rand Corporation investigated the outcomes of the model through the 2017-2018 school year. What they found was astounding but not surprising. Here are the key findings from their report, titled “Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools: An Assessment of the Impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative:”

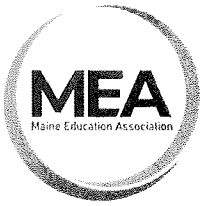
### Key Findings

**NYC-CS had positive effects for students across various outcome measures with some notable exceptions**

- NYC-CS had a positive impact on student attendance for students in all grades and across all three years of the study.
- NYC-CS had a positive impact on on-time grade progression in all three years of the study, and on high school students' graduation rates in two of the three years.
- NYC-CS led to a reduction in disciplinary incidents for elementary and middle school students but not for high school students. The reduction for high school students was smaller and not statistically significant.
- NYC-CS had a positive impact on math achievement in the third and final year, but the impact estimates on reading achievement in all three years and on math achievement in the first two years were smaller and not statistically significant.
- NYC-CS had a positive impact on credit accumulation for high school students across all three years of the study.
- Teachers' reports of shared responsibility for student success increased at elementary and middle schools in the second and third years of the study.
- The authors found a positive effect on students' sense of connectedness to adults and peers for elementary and middle school students but only for the second year of the study period.
- The authors found no statistically significant impact on families' reports of engagement opportunities in elementary and middle schools.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Please see, *Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools: An Assessment of the Impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative*, prepared by the Rand Corporation, found here: [Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools: An Assessment of the Impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative | RAND](#)



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But it is not just urban schools that benefit from the community schools model. The Brookings Institute provided a sample of community schools in rural communities in their report, “To meet the changing needs of small school districts, superintendents harness community strategies.”<sup>3</sup> This report provided examples of the work being done in rural communities across the country to develop community schools to better meet the needs of students.

I could go on with studies and research and reports demonstrating the positive impact of community schools for students. Instead, I will point you to the National Education Association’s web page on community schools which has wealth of information, links to research, and case studies of schools around the country that have moved to a community schools design: [What Are Community Schools? | NEA](#)

We know this model works. We know community schools can and will have positive impacts on students and their learning. Now we must find the resources to better support schools that want to build this model. For these reasons, we fully support LD 1527. Thank you for your time and for your service to the people of Maine. I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>3</sup> Please see, *To meet the changing needs of small school districts, superintendents harness community strategies*, prepared by the Brookings Institution, found here: [To meet the changing needs of small school districts, superintendents harness community school strategies \(brookings.edu\)](#)