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Testimony of Representative Michael Brennan introducing
**LD 1526, An Act to Provide Grants to Support Reading Proficiency
Programming in Schools**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty and fellow distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. I am Michael Brennan, and I represent House District 115, which includes a portion of Portland. I am here to introduce **LD 1526, An Act to Provide Grants to Support Reading Proficiency Programming in Schools**.

Two years ago, we directed the Maine Department of Education (DOE) to conduct an analysis of reading proficiency. The report also included a number of other issues related to reading assessment. The report was presented to the Education Committee in two installments. The first report was issued in December 2021 and the second report was submitted in December of 2022.

According to the first report, the “ability to read well is, at its core, an issue of equity. Reading is a foundational skill for success in school, work, and citizenship (Kogut, 2004; Wise 2009).” The second report states that in 2015, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning.”

Both reports provide significant insights into reading proficiency in Maine’s public schools. None more sobering than the attached data. As noted, there are significant differences in reading proficiencies based on race and income.

This bill allocates \$2 million for the next two years to the DOE to administer a grant program to promote best practices to increase reading proficiency. This approach mirrors the second recommendation in the December 2022 report that calls for:

- 2). Direct the Department of Education (DOE) to establish and manage a grant/incentive program to strengthen early literacy programming (Pre-K through Grade 3) with special consideration given to SAUs serving populations of students with identified achievement gaps (e.g., race, income, etc.). The grant/incentive program would support SAU

District 115: Part of Portland

implementation of Tier 1 (core) early literacy improvement efforts grounded in science and whole student approaches including but not limited to:

- formation of literacy leadership teams that develop, communicate, and cultivate a culture of shared responsibility for children's reading/literacy development
- development of onboarding tools/strategies to support beginning educators in teaching reading/literacy across the Pre-K to Grade 3 span
- provision of professional learning in early reading/literacy pedagogy
- implementation of systematic and explicit instructional approaches for supporting foundational reading/literacy development
- implementation of early literacy screening and progress monitoring tools
- provision of early literacy instructional coaching models

I am sure everyone on this committee understands the importance of reading and how it is directly related to success in school and life.

I want to thank the DOE for completing their reports and providing us with a framework and path forward. I also want to thank this committee for its consideration, and I look forward to working with you on this critical issue.

Comprehension	The reader ability to decode print and understand what has been read is complex. Reading comprehension requires students to bring memory, background knowledge, vocabulary, and inferences to understand what is read.	Perfetti, C. A., Landi, N., Oakhill, J. V. (2005). The acquisition of reading comprehension skill. In Snowling, M. J., Hulme, C. (Eds.), The science of reading: A handbook (pp. 227-247). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
Text-Based Writing	Comprehension is broadened and intensified when students are provided opportunities to make meaningful connections between what is read and what they are writing. When writing is used as a tool to scaffold, reflect, explain, or provide evidence the comprehension is solidified, and the transfer of learning is more likely to be secured.	Pimentel, S., Liben, M. (2021) Reading as Liberation-An Examination of the Research Base: How Equity, Acceleration and Personalization Improve Student Learning. Student Achievement Partners.

State Assessment Data Findings

Maine Grade 3 English Language Arts Data

Several sources of data were studied to explore patterns of achievement related to beginning reading in Maine and to identify schools with consistently strong reading achievement to study promising practices. The most recent publicly available state English language arts (ELA) summative assessment data comes from the 2018-19 school year administration of the eMPower assessment. Results for grade 3 from the 2018-19 administration indicate the following:

Statewide | 2018-2019 | Grade 3

