

Testimony of Faye Gmeiner, Kennebunk, ME

LD 1769: An Act Concerning Students Who Experience Educational Disruption due to Temporary or Permanent Changes Where they Live

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Faye Gmeiner. I was the KMCC Liaison for the South Portland School Department from 2004 to 2012.

I am in favor of LD 1769: An Act Concerning Students Who Experience Educational Disruption due to Temporary or Permanent Changes Where They Live.

Keeping Maine's Children Connected is not a new program. In my almost five decades as an educator, the Keeping Maine's Children Connected initiative, better known as KMCC, was the most efficient and effective infrastructure I have experienced for supporting children and youth in crisis or experiencing disruption in their education. We saw significant benefits for the children and their families. And - KMCC accomplished all of this with existing school and agency personnel serving as liaisons, a database, and one project coordinator. It is a great example of high impact at low cost.

A metaphor might help explain why KMCC was so effective. If we look at the children and youth as the hub of a wheel (and the center of our concern), each agency was a spoke on that wheel that could provide needed support for the child's continued connection with school and needed services. KMCC was the rim that held all those spokes in place and together. The communication structure, database, and liaisons were the materials that strengthened and integrated the supports.

Two or three regional liaison meetings a year helped maintain relationships, integrate new liaisons, and support cross sector communication and collaboration. These regional meetings also helped liaisons and agencies move beyond thinking in silos to create a community that nurtured the child and family.

Students and youth engaged in their new educational programs more quickly because the receiving district's liaison could use the database to quickly find an agency or previous district liaison who knew which staff member would be the best resource for information about the student's needs and strengths. This often saved days of searching. It also helped in getting wrap around services in place. For some students and families, it was a comfort and relief to know that their previous teacher or service provider was helping with the transition.

KMCC's facilitation of interagency relationships, its efficiency, and the student outcomes got better and better over time. Its organizational structure helped reduce duplication of services by the multiple agencies involved and increase

recognition of gaps in needed supports. My perception is that available resources were used more effectively.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience and perspectives. I encourage you to consider re-establishing KMCC. I have every reason to believe that the student outcomes could be just as good, if not better than they were in the early 2000s. I support LD 1769 because it would help students across Maine experiencing disruption in their education to engage more consistently in their educational programs.

Please contact me at favevgmeiner@gmail.com if I can provide further information about the history of Keeping Maine's Children Connected or answer any questions.