

*In- Support  
LD 2002*

**Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and honorable members of the Education & Cultural Affairs Committee,**

I'm Justin Chenette, Sweetser's Senior Director of Public Relations & Advancement. I am here today to kick off our testimony in support of LD 2002 An Act to Provide Incentives to Schools that Contract for Certain Social Work and Family Therapy Services.

It's great to be back before this committee as a former member of the Maine State Board of Education and back before many of you who I served with as both a Senator and Representative for 8 years. Your public service and commitment to Maine's next generation does not go unnoticed.

I'd like to thank Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross for her leadership and interest in putting this idea forward. Our entire behavioral health community appreciates her passion for youth and for finding solutions to addressing mental health challenges Mainers of all ages face.

To set the scene:

- Maine teen suicide rates exceed the national rates with Maine students who seriously considered suicide increasing to 19%.
- 36% of Maine's high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless with nearly half of Maine teen girls reported feeling sad or hopeless.
- 14,000 Mainers ages 12–17 have depression.

To help meet this growing demand and need for preventative mental health services, Sweetser is meeting the moment at a great financial loss.

Sweetser provides treatment in over 25 school districts and in over 100 schools including elementary, middle, and high schools. Sweetser has approximately 80 school-based clinicians across the State of Maine and we served over 2,300 students last year in schools, from Kittery to Bangor. I attached a full list for you.

We are embedded on school campuses, working alongside the dedicated public education staff who are consistently being asked to do more with less. Mental health support takes a village and providers like us are one important part of that puzzle.

Every single year, this program loses money. Not many organizations would keep that afloat, but we do. It's where our heart is. But it's not sustainable without you. Without passing and funding this bill.

I don't want to see on the 6 o'clock news or on the front page of the paper, 100 Maine public schools no longer providing youth mental health treatment. That's not a faint possibility, it's an absolute reality if we don't find a path forward.

In summary this bill before you would allow the Department of Education to setup a grant-like incentive for schools to contract with a behavioral health provider to provide school based therapy services. This would reduce costs for schools, help financially stabilize the program for providers like us, and ensure students get the mental health support they and their families need. Behind me we have a number of speakers that will break down the problem we are trying to solve, why this program is so impactful, and the difference between the different types of school-based supports for addressing the mental health of Maine's next generation.

Appreciate you hearing this bill and this important topic and I hope over the course of this hearing you see value to preventing school-based therapy services from shutting down. That is what is at stake today and the decision before you with this bill. Thank you for your time and for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
**Justin Chenette**  
Senior Director of Public Relations & Advancement

**Schools/Districts and Communities that Sweetser contracted directly with  
or areas Sweetser serves students & their families regardless of contract:**

- 1) **Kittery School District**
- 2) Horace Mitchell Elementary School
- 3) Shapleigh Middle School
- 4) Traip Academy
  
- 5) **MSAD 60 School (NO. Berwick, Noble, Lebanon)**
- 6) Hanson School (Lebanon)
- 7) Lebanon Elementary School
- 8) Eric Knowlton
- 9) North Berwick Elementary School
- 10) Vivian Hussey
- 11) Noble Middle School
- 12) Noble High School
  
- 13) **MSAD 35 School (So. Berwick, Eliot)**
- 14) Central School (So. Berwick)
- 15) Eliot Elementary
- 16) Mary Hurd School
- 17) Great Works School
- 18) Marshwood Middle School
- 19) Marshwood High School
  
- 20) **Sanford School Department**
- 21) Carl J. Lamb School
- 22) Willard School
- 23) Sanford Pride Elementary
- 24) Margaret Chase Smith
- 25) Sanford Junior High
- 26) Sanford High School
  
- 27) **MSAD55 Sacopee Valley (Hiram)**
- 28) SV/Hiram Elementary School
- 29) SV/Hiram Middle School
- 30) SV/Hiram High School
  
- 31) **Saco School Department**
- 32) Fairfield School
- 33) Young School
- 34) CK Burns School
- 35) Saco Middle School
- 36) Thornton Academy Middle School
- 37) Thornton Academy
  
- 38) **Dayton Consolidated School (District)**
  
- 39) **SAD 57**
- 40) Waterboro Elementary School
- 41) Line Elementary School
- 42) Shapleigh Memorial School
- 43) Alfred Elementary School
- 44) Lyman Elementary School
- 45) Massabesic Junior High School
- 46) Massabesic High School

**47) South Portland School District**

- 48) Frank I. Brown Elementary School
- 49) Helena H. Dyer Elementary School
- 50) James O. Kaler Elementary School
- 51) Dr. Waldo T. Skillin Elementary School
- 52) Dora Small Elementary School
- 53) South Portland Middle School
- 54) South Portland High School

**55) RSU14 (Windham, Raymond Schools)**

- 56) Windham Primary School
- 57) Manchester School
- 58) Raymond Elementary School
- 59) Jordan Small Middle School

**60) Brunswick School Department**

- 61) Harriet Beecher Stowe Elementary School
- 62) Kate Furbish Elementary School
- 63) Brunswick Junior High
- 64) Brunswick High School

**65) RSU1 School District (Bath, Woolwich, Phippsburg)**

- 66) Woolwich Central School
- 67) Phippsburg Elementary School
- 68) Fisher Mitchell School
- 69) Dike Newell School
- 70) Bath Middle School
- 71) Morse High School

**72) West Bath School District**

**73) MSAD75 (Topsham, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Harpswell)**

- 74) Bowdoin Central School
- 75) Bowdoinham Community School
- 76) Harpswell Community School
- 77) Williams-Cone Elementary School
- 78) Woodside Elementary School
- 79) Mt. Ararat Middle School
- 80) Mt. Ararat High School

**81) RSU16 School District (Mechanic Falls, Minot, Poland)**

- 82) Elm Street School
- 83) Poland Community School
- 84) Bruce Whittier Middle School

**85) RSU13 (Rockland, Thomaston, Cushing, Owls Head, Ash Point)**

- 86) Cushing Community School
- 87) South School
- 88) Oceanside Middle School
- 89) Oceanside High School

**90) RSU28 & Five Town CSD (Camden, Rockport, Appleton, Hope, Lincolnville)**

- 91) Camden/Rockport Elementary School
- 92) Camden/Rockport Middle School
- 93) Camden/Rockport High School

**94) RSU71 (Belfast, East Belfast, Searsmont, Morrill, Swanville)**

- 95) Ames School (Searsomont)

- 96) Capt. Albert Stevens School (Belfast)
- 97) East Belfast School
- 98) Gladys Weymouth School
- 99) Kermit Kickerson School
- 100) Troy Howard Middle School
- 101) Belfast Area High School
- 102) Belfast Community Outreach Program in Education (BCOPE)
  
- 103) RSU20 Searsport**
- 104) Searsport Elementary School
- 105) Searsport Middle School
- 106) Searsport High School
  
- 107) RSU3 (Brooks, Freedom, Jackson, Knox, Liberty, Monroe, Montville, Thorndike, Troy, Unity, Waldo)**
- 108) Monroe Elementary School
- 109) Morse Memorial Elementary School
- 110) Mount View Elementary School
- 111) Troy Elementary School
- 112) Unity School
- 113) Walker Elementary School
- 114) Mount View Middle School
- 115) Mount View High School
  
- 116) Union76**
- 117) Brooklin Elementary School
- 118) Sedgwick Elementary School
  
- 119) Union93**
- 120) Brooksville Elementary School
- 121) Penobscot Elementary School
- 122) Surry Elementary School
  
- 123) CSD13**
- 124) Deer Isle Stonington Elementary School
  
- 125) Private/Specialty Purpose Schools**
- 126) St. James School (K – 8) Biddeford
- 127) All Saints School (K – 8) Bangor
  
- 128) Secondary Schools**
- 129) Southern Maine Community College (SMCC) South Portland
  
- 130) Districts see several clients in but are not formerly contracted with**
- 131) York School Department
- 132) Wells Ogunquit CSD
  
- 133) Housing and Recovery Communities**
- 134) Bangor
- 135) Brewer
- 136) Old Town
- 137) Bath
- 138) McCauley Residence (Bangor)