

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 345

AN ACT REGARDING EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Jane Osborne
Deer Isle-Stonington CSD

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Steven Bailey, executive director of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Management Association testifying on behalf of the legislative committee of MSBA in support of L.D. 345.

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Faye Anderson
RSU 22

This bill would ultimately transfer the oversight of Child Development Services from the Department of Education to individual school districts over a four-year period. Funding would be outside the school funding formula and require the state to fund 100 percent versus a state and local share.

VICE PRESIDENT

Joseph Long
MSAD 35/RSU 35

The four-year ramp up in this bill is designed to make sure districts are ready to take on this responsibility, and take it on when they think they are up to the task. The hope is that school regions as a collective could hire speech and language clinicians and other specialists that could be shared.

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Peggy Lembo-Splaine
Boothbay-Boothbay Harbor CSD

Perhaps most important is the oversight a district can provide to help assure that children are getting the care they need. CDS is an autonomous agency and does not have the same kind of oversight district administration can provide, not to mention the ease of transition for children ages three and four with disabilities who now would be within the monitoring structure of the school district – so no change of service would be needed once the child entered kindergarten (or PreK).

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Steven W. Bailey

You will most likely hear from others that CDS has not been working as well as it should. That is not to blame anyone, but we believe local oversight will help,

MAINE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL BOARD ATTORNEYS

Hannah Wurgaft, Esq., Chair

The DOE tells us there are an estimated 900 contractors working for CDS and we need to be able to deploy them with greater efficiency. We believe that will happen with more local control over the provision of services. This effort will require an “all hands on deck” approach utilizing the personnel now engaged by CDS and those providers within school districts.

These are reasons the Maine School Boards Association legislative committee is in support of this bill, recognizing that similar language is also within the Governor’s Supplemental Budget.

There are challenges that will be experienced along the way, and all answers may not yet have been worked out. Patience, persistence, and continual support from all stakeholders will be needed for this plan to work. Available workforce (including teachers and administrators), certification of PreK staff, space, guaranteed funding, transportation, and development of regional approaches are challenges that will need to be both explored and successfully implemented for this plan to be successful. Additionally, if the school districts

are to be responsible for FAPE (Free and Appropriate Education) for these students, they, the districts, need to be assured that supports and resources are there, annually, for this to be a guarantee for these students.

MSBA's legislative committee recognizes the work that has gone into the planning for this transition. The time has come for children of ages three and four to be better served through this comprehensive approach to their services. While we know there is much work to be done, and eyes need to stay wide open to see that this additional work gets done, now is the time to make this move. With the above observations and concerns noted, we urge passage of L.D. 345.