

**PENDER MAKIN, COMMISSIONER
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
And the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Hearing Date: February 7, 2025, 1:00 pm

**LD 210 “An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the
General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government
and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper
Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025,
June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027”**

Senators Rotundo and Rafferty, Representatives Gattine and Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Pender Makin and I am the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Education (Maine DOE). I am here today to present testimony for those departmental items in the biennial budget bill.

Maine, like many states, is facing a tight budget environment. The Mills Administration has spent months carefully developing a balanced budget proposal to preserve the programs lawmakers and Maine people support, including education, revenue sharing, public safety, higher education, and school meals, while also protecting the long-term fiscal health of Maine.

Ultimately, we took a balanced approach: one that makes some investments - including operational needs such as technology efficiencies and collective bargaining impacts - that proposes some spending cuts, and that makes some targeted revenue increases. We know these proposals are difficult and we appreciate your consideration.

We look forward to working with you over the coming months to enact a budget that supports our greatest asset of all: the people of Maine.

SUMMARY

Maine’s Department of Education is responsible for supporting a coordinated system of public education in accordance with the Constitution of the State of Maine, Article VIII and with the intent of the Legislature that every person receives the benefits of a free public education and that control and management of the schools remain vested in the local communities through their locally elected school boards.

In this especially challenging budget environment, and acknowledging the ever-increasing expectations for our Department and for the 265 school administrative units we serve, we are proposing here to manage most of our operations within existing baseline amounts in order to focus on maintaining our state's promise to fund 55% of the total cost of education.

Position reclassifications and reorganizations related to approved employee-initiated actions include a retroactive pay component back to the date the request was signed. Reclass and reorganization requests are summarized at the end of testimony as **Appendix A**. While I won't read the specifics, we have included information in this testimony on the relevant page in italics for your reference.

Our budget includes requests for increases to support the centralized service centers. These include: financial, human resources, technology, insurance, and postal services provided by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services. Other examples are legal services provided by the Office of the Attorney General and dispatch services provided by the Department of Public Safety. These rates are being adjusted statewide as a result of vendor increases, capital needs, supply chain impacts, but the primary factor is the significant collective bargaining efforts approved by the Governor and Legislature. Our Department's centralized service requests are summarized at the end of this testimony as **Appendix B**. While I won't read the specifics, we have included information in this testimony on the relevant page, in italics, for your reference.

Our proposal includes allotment adjustments as a result of the State's independent Revenue Forecasting Committee forecast. Our Department's RFC adjustments are summarized at the end of this testimony as **Appendix C**. While I won't read the specifics, we have included information in this testimony on the relevant page in italics for your reference.

Our proposal includes a net increase of .5 positions, including one new position for Education in the Unorganized Territory, 5.5 net positions for the Maine DOE and a transfer out of 6 net positions from the Maine Commission for Community Service to the Maine Office of Community Affairs. The positions requested are necessary to maintain current operations and carry out program activities as legislatively intended. I will describe the need and impact of each request throughout my testimony.

PART A

ADULT EDUCATION

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-202**. Our Adult Education program at DOE provides administrative and technical support and assistance for adult education programs statewide including adult and community education, adult basic education, adult high school diploma, high school equivalency diploma testing program, family literacy, job skills training and college transition programs. There are no new initiatives for this program.

CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-203**. This base allocation was established in the event that federal funds are received to fund a Charter School Program that would primarily make sub-grants to charter schools per federal regulations. To date no federal funds have been received. Maine's public Charter Schools receive \$35,480,746 in General Fund operating allocation through the General Purpose Aid for Local Schools program that can be found in **Language Part C on Page 2 of the language document**. There are no new initiatives for this program.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (CDS)

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-204**. A **quasi-governmental agency**, the CDS program is responsible for the provision of child find activities, early intervention services and free appropriate public education services to eligible children. CDS is designated as the State Education Agency responsible for carrying out the State's obligations under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for children, birth through age 5. It has **two initiatives** that may be also found on page **A-204**.

The **first initiative** provides General Funds of \$1,378,865 in fiscal year 2026 and \$1,436,808 in fiscal year 2027 for increases in staff costs attributed to collective bargaining. In fiscal year 2023-24, Child Development Services negotiated a three-year contract with the Maine State Employees Association for salary and benefit increases in fiscal years 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27. This initiative includes the projected cost of salary and benefit increases for the second and third years of the contract.

The **second initiative** provides \$231,872 in each year of the biennium to bring the allocation in line with available resources for the Infant, Toddlers & Families (Part C) grant. The objective of this federal grant is to assist states in implementing a

statewide, multidisciplinary, interagency system to make available early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

CLIMATE EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PILOT PROGRAM

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-205**. This program was established to encourage climate education in Maine public schools by providing grants for professional development for educators on climate science and supporting the preparation of courses on interdisciplinary climate education for a period of 3 years. This program also supports a limited-period State Education Representative position to administer the program. This program has **one initiative** on page **A-205**.

This initiative continues one limited-period State Education Representative position through June 30, 2026 and provides funding for related All Other costs. Resolve 2021, chapter 178 provided the funding to support a climate education grant program, including a limited-period position to develop and execute the grant program, while designing resources and training in climate education across all content areas and grade levels. This initiative extends the end date of the Climate Education Specialist position through the end of this grant.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROGRAM

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-206**. The Community Schools Program has a base allocation in the event that funds are received to support community school implementation and expansion as authorized by Public Law 2019, chapter 434. To date no federal funds have been received. There are no new initiatives for this program.

CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD CHECK FUND

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-206**. This account receives transfers from the Department of Public Safety to fund a portion of a Maine DOE position. The position processes the fingerprinting and background checks required of all public school staff. There are no new initiatives for this program.

DIGITAL LITERACY FUND

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-207**. The Digital Literacy Fund is an Other Special Revenue Fund used to provide technical assistance to SAUs to support the use of digital curricula including digital textbooks and open educational resources. There are no new initiatives for this program.

EARLY CHILDHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page A-207. The Early Childhood Infrastructure program provides grants to school administrative units through the Maine Jobs and Recovery Program. Grant funds are used to support new or expanding public prekindergarten programs. This program has **one initiative** that provides a one-time allocation to allow for continued expenditures through the end of the grant funds.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION PATHWAYS PILOT PROJECTS

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page A-208. The early childhood special education pathways pilot project is a one-time accelerated graduate program developed around early childhood education certification to provide reimbursement for coursework. There are no new initiatives for this program.

EDUCATION IN THE UNORGANIZED TERRITORY (EUT)

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page A-209. The purpose of the EUT program is to provide educational programming and related support services to school-age children whose parents reside in the unorganized territory of the State. The program must meet the general standards for elementary and secondary schooling and special education established for organized municipal units.

Funding is provided to educate 848 students currently residing in unorganized territories, including 104 students in three EUT schools. The Department operates these three schools and tuitions 744 students to 84 SAUs and private schools.

Funds expended from the General Fund budget for EUT educational services are fully reimbursed each fiscal year by local tax revenues raised in the unorganized territory through the Municipal Cost Component Act. This program has **three initiatives** that can be found on page A-209.

The **first initiative** provides funding to increase one seasonal Education Specialist III position from 48 weeks to 52 weeks annually. This position provides administrative support and direction for all students receiving special education services through Education in the Unorganized Territory. This position ensures state and federal compliance related to special education for all students receiving education in the Unorganized Territory.

The **second initiative** provides one-time funding of \$150,000 in each year of the biennium for maintenance of 3 state-owned schools in the unorganized territories.

The school buildings are between 50 and 60 years old and are currently undergoing significant upgrades to address health and safety deficiencies. This initiative provides funding to enhance the preventative maintenance programs and to maintain buildings and grounds.

The **third initiative** provides one-time funding of \$30,000 in each year of the biennium for maintenance of a fleet of school buses in the unorganized territories. This initiative provides funding to maintain the EUT bus fleet ensuring that no bus active in student transport fails to meet safety standards and compliance.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING GRANT

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page A-210. This program's baseline allocations were established in the event that funds are received from federal or private sources for grants to adult education programs for English language acquisition and workforce training programs as authorized by Public Law 2021, chapter 68. To date no funds have been received. There are no new initiatives for this program.

FUND FOR A HEALTHY MAINE (FHM) – SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page A-211. The School Breakfast Program is a component of the Maine DOE's Child Nutrition Program. This program reimburses school units for the provision of breakfast to those students eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program. The fund helps to offset breakfast costs that would otherwise be in the universal free meals state program, paid out of general fund. There are no new initiatives for this program.

FUND FOR THE EFFICIENT DELIVERY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page A-211. The Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services provided one-time funds to school administrative units, municipalities and counties in support of costs of local and regional initiatives to improve educational opportunity and student achievement through more efficient delivery of educational programs and services. Final payments were made in fiscal year 2024, and **Language Part II on page 72** transfers the unspent cash balance of \$2,214,574 to the unappropriated surplus of the General Fund. There are no new initiatives for this program.

GENERAL PURPOSE AID FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS (GPA)

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-212**. GPA forms the core of state funding for Maine public schools. The School Finance Team distributes these funds according to statute and provides technical assistance regarding that distribution to Maine's school administrative units. SAUs use GPA funds, together with local tax revenues, to provide pre-K through grade 12 educational programs so that each student has the opportunity to achieve Maine's Learning Results. This program includes the General Fund and Other Special Revenue Funds, which are derived from revenue received from the Oxford Casino. It has **ten initiatives** that may be found on pages **A-212 to A-213**.

*The **first initiative** provides funding for the approved reclassification of one Deputy Commissioner of Education position from range 38 to range 39. This position has major decision-making authority over a large portion of the department budget. This role has seen increased responsibilities associated with managing through a pandemic including oversight of the substantial programmatic and fiscal responsibilities associated with over \$1 billion in emergency funding programs for the State of Maine's education system. (Appendix A)*

The **second initiative** provides funding of \$63,893,687 in fiscal year 2026 and \$92,610,521 in fiscal year 2027 to maintain the statutory requirement of funding the state share of the total cost of funding public education from kindergarten to grade 12 at 55%. Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 15671, subsection 1 requires funding the state share percentage of the total cost of public education from kindergarten to grade 12 at 55%. This initiative is supported with **Language Part C on Pages 1 - 6** of the language document.

*The **third initiative** provides General Funds of \$572,450 in each year of the biennium for statewide technology services provided by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Office of Information Technology. (Appendix B)*

*The **fourth initiative** provides funding for the approved reorganization of one Education Specialist III position to a Public Service Coordinator I position, increases the hours from 57 hours to 80 hours biweekly, and transfers All Other to Personal Services to fund the reorganization. This position provides the coordination and management oversight of the logistical operation of the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI). The position will have the additional responsibilities of overseeing MLTI's \$14 million budget as well as supervising two staff positions. (Appendix A)*

*The **fifth initiative** increases the Other Special Revenue Funds allocation by \$625,499 in fiscal year 2026 and \$1,266,635 in fiscal year 2027 to bring the allocation in line with projected revenue as recommended in the March 2024 forecast of the Revenue Forecasting Committee. (Appendix C)*

The **sixth initiative** continues and makes permanent one Education Specialist III position previously established by financial order and reduces All Other to fund the position. This position coordinates MLTT's Ambassador program to provide instructional coaching and deliver professional learning experiences to schools statewide.

The **seventh initiative** transfers one Public Service Manager II position from the Office of Workforce Development and Innovative Pathways program to the GPA program within the same fund. This position oversees early college opportunities for high school and CTE programs. The related initiative is on page **A-233** reflecting the transfer from the Office of Workforce Development and Innovative Pathways program.

The **eighth initiative** continues and makes permanent one Public Service Manager II position previously established in Public Law 2023, chapter 412 and reduces All Other to fund the position. This position provides direct oversight and supervision of the Learning Through Technology team and administration of the \$14 million operating budget.

The **ninth initiative** establishes one Public Service Coordinator I position and reduces All Other to fund the position. The department's data warehouse provides data about Maine's students, education staff, schools and school administrative units (SAUs) in one location. This data can be filtered in multiple ways for comparisons across the state, SAUs, and schools, as well as changes over time. Data collected by the department is based on requirements from state and federal statutes. The data warehouse is a core component of the Maine Education Data Management System and the department's State Longitudinal Data System project. This position will serve as the Education Data Warehouse Manager and is integral to departmentwide data projects.

*The **tenth initiative** decreases Other Special Revenue Funds by \$1,429,535 in fiscal year 2026 and \$1,380,256 in fiscal year 2027 to align with revenue projections from the December 1, 2024 revenue forecast. (Appendix C)*

HIGHER ED INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE ADVISORY COMMISSION FUND

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-214**. The purpose of the Interpersonal Violence Advisory Commission Fund is to accept funds for the development of an interpersonal violence survey for dissemination to institutions of higher education. There are no new initiatives for this program.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND EDUCATOR SUPPORT SERVICES (HEESS)

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-215**. The Office of Higher Education and Educator Support Services works with educators through each phase of their career, from attending an educator preparation program at a college or university to earning certification, entering the field, and growing their skills through mentorship and professional development. This office also represents the Maine DOE in the oversight of institutions of higher education. It has **one initiative** that may also be found on page **A-215**.

This initiative adjusts funding between the General Fund and Other Special Revenue Funds within the same program for annual membership dues to the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE). NEBHE promotes greater education opportunities and services for the residents of New England. This initiative reduces the General Fund appropriation and provides an Other Special Revenue Funds allocation to pay annual dues to the New England Board of Higher Education. Ongoing funding will be provided through a transfer of funds from the National Board Salary Supplement Fund. This initiative is supported with **Language Part EE on Page 71** of the language document.

INNOVATIVE INSTRUCTION AND TUTORING GRANT PROGRAM FUND

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-216**. The Innovative Instruction and Tutoring Grant Program Fund was established to facilitate innovative instruction and tutoring programs that use project-based learning and other interdisciplinary approaches. There are no new initiatives for this program.

INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-217**. The Innovative Teaching and Learning team supports groups of underrepresented students and specific topic areas such as English speakers of other languages, Wabanaki studies and Climate Education. It has **three initiatives** that can all be found on page **A-217**.

The **first initiative** transfers one Interdisciplinary Instruction Specialist position from the School Facilities program, Other Special Revenue Funds, to the Innovative Teaching and Learning program, General Fund and provides funding for related All Other costs. This position serves as an Integrated Literacy Specialist to lead targeted interventions and support strategies that can elevate literacy outcomes across all grade levels. The related initiative is on page **A-238** reflecting the transfer from the School Facilities program.

The **second initiative** provides a baseline allocation in the event federal funding is received.

The **third initiative** provides a baseline allocation in the event private funding is received.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-218**. The Leadership Team exists within the Commissioner's Office. It provides administrative and policymaking services, which support the operations of the Department of Education in the areas of statewide educational planning and innovation, Administrative Procedure Act and Freedom of Access Act compliance, state and federal legislative activity, agency budgeting and finance, strategic planning, communications, advocacy and outreach, and personnel. Each of the activities has broad responsibilities for supporting the work of Maine's pre-K through adult programming for education, elevating all other organizational units within the Department, and representing and evolving the Department within these areas of responsibility to best serve Maine's learners. This program has **seven initiatives** that can be found on pages **A-218 and A-219**.

*The **first initiative** provides funding for the approved reclassification of one Deputy Commissioner of Education position from range 38 to range 39. This position has major decision-making authority over a large portion of the department budget. This role has seen increased responsibilities associated with managing through a pandemic including oversight of the substantial programmatic and fiscal responsibilities associated with over \$1 billion in emergency funding programs for the State of Maine's education system. (Appendix A)*

*The **second initiative** provides General Funds of \$36,979 in fiscal year 2026 and \$283,375 in fiscal year 2027 for the Department's share of the cost for the financial and human resources service center with the Department of Administrative and Financial Services. (Appendix B)*

*The **third initiative** provides funding for the approved reorganization of one Public Service Coordinator I position from range 25 to range 27. This position will serve as the Operations Project Coordinator to lead the coordination of operations, technology, communications, work processes, and general project management for the Office of Operations within the Leadership Team. This position will also serve as a liaison and provide technical support coordination and project facilitation to the department. (Appendix A)*

The **fourth initiative** establishes one Office Specialist II position, eliminates one part-time Office Associate II position and provides funding for related All Other costs. This position will assist with the increased amount of procurement work related to state and federal grants, to ensure a thorough review of state contracts and to provide procurement support to department teams that do not have an administrative support position.

The **fifth initiative** transfers and reallocates the cost of one Public Service Coordinator I position and related All Other costs from the School Finance and Operations program to the Leadership Team program within the same fund. Records management departmentwide is the responsibility of the Office of Operations within the Leadership Team. This position serves as the department's subject matter expert on records maintenance and governance and will lead the application, updating, and creation of department policies and procedures to facilitate the management of records, both physical and electronic, to support the legal, operational, risk management governance needs of the Department. The related initiative is on page A-239 reflecting the transfer from the School Finance and Operations program.

*The **sixth initiative** provides funding of \$20,906 in each year of the biennium for statewide insurance coverage provided through the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Division of Risk Management based on claims experience, coverage increases, attorney fees on claims, and actuarially recommended reserves. (Appendix B)*

The **seventh initiative** transfers one Public Service Executive II position and related All Other costs from the Leadership Team program to the Office of Innovation program within the same fund. This position works to expand partnerships with relevant individuals, associations, education organizations, and schools to secure funding and resources that help to align with the needs and resource gap areas of the department and the State of Maine education system. The

related initiative is on page A-232 reflecting the transfer to the Office of Innovation program

LEARNING SYSTEMS TEAM

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page A-220. The Learning Systems Team is comprised of four work teams: Assessment, Child Nutrition, Elementary & Secondary Education (ESEA) and Emergency Federal Relief Programs (EFRP). This Office utilizes, processes and supports implementation of federal programs/grants including the ESEA, Child and Adult Care Food Program, National School Lunch Program, Supply Chain Assistance and funding streams under the American Rescue Plan. The office coordinates, manages, oversees and supports services related to the blending, braiding and utilization of federal funds to support instructional programs and activities for all Maine learners. The office also collects, summarizes, and analyzes student data for performance, public reports and policy direction and provides technical assistance and professional learning opportunities utilizing best practice and program operations. It has **eight initiatives** that are on pages A-220 to A-221 and is supported by **Language Part HH on Page 71** of the language document.

The **first initiative** reduces funding to align allocations with projected resources as grant funding is no longer available. Allocation is no longer needed as Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund grant funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act ended September 30, 2022, and funding received through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act ended September 30, 2023.

The **second initiative** provides funding to bring allocation in line with available resources for the Head Start Collaboration grant. The objective of this grant is to enhance partnerships between Head Start and public schools in the State of Maine.

The **third initiative** provides funding to bring allocation in line with available resources for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program grant. The objective of this grant is to create community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools.

The **fourth initiative** reduces funding to align allocations with projected resources as grant funding is no longer available. Allocation is no longer needed as funding for the Rethinking Responsive Education Venture grant ended on July 31, 2024.

The **fifth initiative** reallocates the cost of one Management Analyst II position from 100% Federal Expenditures Fund to 90% Federal Expenditures Fund and 10% General Fund with the same program. This position ensures consistency in process and procedures and continues to examine areas of efficiency and streamlining across all federal programs while supporting necessary staffing structures to process \$80 million in Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) federal funds across five grants, ensuring fiscal oversight, necessary technical assistance and compliance verification. This initiative transfers a portion of the position costs to the General Fund to allow for work with non-federal funds and to provide departmentwide assistance and support as needed.

The **sixth initiative** continues four limited-period positions that support the federal Preschool Development grant through December 31, 2026 and adjusts All Other funding to align with available grant funds. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) received a preschool development grant in December 2022. DHHS is partnering with the Department of Education to ensure children and their families will receive the services they need through an efficient, data-driven and evidenced-based system so that all children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. These positions support the work of the grant through targeted outreach and support for families, expansion of community-based pre-K partnerships, early childhood education workforce development and integration of early childhood data across state agencies. This initiative continues four positions through the end of the grant and provides funding for related costs.

The **seventh initiative** provides one-time allocations in Federal Expenditures Fund-ARP State Fiscal Recovery accounts. An allocation in these accounts will allow for continued expenditures through the end of the grant funds.

The **eighth initiative** reduces funding to align with available resources. The department receives funding through a three-year Department of Health and Human Services Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five renewal grant. This initiative reduces the allocation to align funding with the available grant award.

LEARNING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-222**. This team provides the tools and resources to assist Maine's teachers in integrating technology into their classrooms and curriculum. Programs include the Maine Learning Technology Initiative and the Maine Online Opportunities for Sustained Education (MOOSE) project, which created asynchronous, interdisciplinary, project-based learning

modules for use by students and teachers. There are no new initiatives for this program.

LOCAL FOODS

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-223**. This program supports the use of local produce in schools by matching \$1 for every \$3 a school administrative unit pays for produce, value-added dairy, protein or minimally processed foods purchased directly from a farmer, farmers' cooperative, local food hub, local food processor or food service distributor in the State. All foods purchased under this program must be grown or produced in Maine. There are no new initiatives for this program.

MAINE CLIMATE CORPS PROGRAM – MAINE COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-224**. This program provides grants, technical assistance and training to community service corps programs with the mission of responding to climate impacts. Community service corps programs engage community members in service activities and meet the eligibility criteria outlined in Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 7507. There is **one initiative** that continues and makes permanent one Senior Planner position previously established by financial order and reduces All Other to partially fund the position. The position supports Maine's Climate Action Plan by overseeing the development and implementation of Maine Climate Corps and Maine Service Fellows activities.

Beginning July 1, 2025 this program will be transferred to the Maine Office of Community Affairs to provide coordinated and efficient technical assistance and funding in partnership with communities across Maine.

MAINE COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-225**. The Maine Commission for Community Service builds capacity and sustainability in Maine's volunteer and service communities through training for individuals and organizations responsible for engaging volunteers in service, grants to implement volunteer programs or strengthen their impact, and technical assistance on how to use service as a strategy to tackle community problems. The goal is to address needs effectively and efficiently by extending the impact of local resources through volunteer involvement. As the lead state agency for national and community service programming, the Commission awards funds allocated to Maine under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. This program has **one initiative** found on page **A-225**.

This initiative reduces funding to align allocations with projected available resources as grant funding is no longer available. Allocation is no longer needed as the Maine Commission for Community Service grant funding through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act ended on December 31, 2024.

Beginning July 1, 2025 this program will be transferred to the Maine Office of Community Affairs to provide coordinated and efficient technical assistance and funding in partnership with communities across Maine.

MAINE HIV PREVENTION EDUCATION PROGRAM

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page A-226. This General Fund program provides funds for HIV prevention training of health educators, student peer educators, special education teachers, and other teachers and youth workers. There are no new initiatives for this program.

MAINE SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER (MSSC)

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page A-227. The Maine School Safety Center provides guidance, training and technical support to Maine's schools to assist them in meeting their safety and security requirements. The MSSC is developing a safe school infrastructure that will deliver high quality, up-to-date best practices, procedures, training and technical assistance and support to Maine schools. This program has **four initiatives** that are found on pages A-227 to A-228.

The **first initiative** transfers one Public Service Coordinator II position from the Federal Expenditures Fund to the General Fund within the same program and reduces All Other to fund this position. This Threat Assessment and Mental Health Coordinator position serves as a subject matter expert to assure and facilitate the highly complex public health model of creating and maintaining a safe school environment as the coordination of disparate mental health programs is needed.

The **second initiative** continues and makes permanent a Public Service Coordinator I position that provides administrative support to the MSSC team, reduces All Other funding and eliminates a vacant State Education Representative position. The Public Service Coordinator I position serves as the Administrative Operations Manager to assist the Maine School Safety Center (MSSC) Director with internal operations and administrative functions within the office. This initiative also eliminates a State Education Representative position. The related

initiative is on page A-236 reflecting the transfer out of the School and Student Supports program.

The **third initiative** continues and makes permanent one Public Service Coordinator II position previously established by financial order. This School Safety and Security Coordinator position serves as the subject matter expert in school safety and security and provides training to school personnel responsible for the day-to-day safety and security of their buildings on the most up to date school safety and security practices.

*The **fourth initiative** provides funding for the reclassification of one State Education Representative to a Public Service Coordinator II position. This position coordinates the training and implementation of school-based restorative practices. The position designs, develops and delivers curriculum and training methods, recruits and manages ten contracted staff positions necessary for implementation of training programs and conducts statewide school training needs assessments and evaluation. This position collaborates with other state organizations and community partners including work with the Children's Cabinet on issues pertaining to marginalized and system-involved youth in Maine. (Appendix A)*

MAINE SERVICE FELLOWS PROGRAM

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page A-229. This program places Service Fellows with rural and underserved communities in the State as a resource to address critical health and human, public safety, education and environmental needs. Service Fellows commit a year of service to the community. They are young professionals who have completed a college degree within the prior 5 years and receive a living allowance that permits them to serve full-time. Service Fellows carry out projects designed and guided by community residents with solutions based in whole or in part in volunteer service. There is **one initiative** on page A-229.

This initiative continues one limited-period Volunteer Service Coordinator position previously established by financial order through September 30, 2029 and provides funding for related All Other costs. The position will support Maine Service Fellows during their service and assist with program including training, technical assistance, and implementation of the host site's community project.

Beginning July 1, 2025 this program will be transferred to the Maine Office of Community Affairs to provide coordinated and efficient technical assistance and funding in partnership with communities across Maine.

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION SALARY SUPPLEMENT FUND

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-230**. The National Board Certification Supplement Fund provides a salary supplement for teachers who have attained certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. This Other Special Revenue Funds program is funded by fees collected from the initial and renewal of teacher, education specialist and administrator certificates. There are no new initiatives for this program.

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-230**. The National Board Certification Scholarship Fund provides scholarships to teachers as an incentive to encourage teachers to apply for national board certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. School administrative units or publicly funded secondary schools may request scholarship funds on behalf of its teachers who meet statutory eligibility requirements. This Other Special Revenue Funds program is funded by fees collected from the initial and renewal of teacher, education specialist and administrator certificates. There are no new initiatives for this program.

OBESITY AND CHRONIC DISEASE FUND

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-231**. The Obesity and Chronic Disease Fund program has a base allocation in the event that funds are received to fund the implementation of a physical education program for elementary schools, new equipment, new staff training, new personnel, administrative costs and other expenses not related to an existing physical education program. There are no new initiatives for this program.

OFFICE OF INNOVATION

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-232**. The Office of Innovation is comprised of five teams: Early Learning, Innovative Teaching and Learning through Technology, Interdisciplinary Instruction, Maine Online Opportunities for Sustained Education and Reinventing Responsive Education Ventures. The office centers its work around human-centered design, innovation engineering and other innovative processes for rapid research and design and ongoing iteration and continuous improvement for perpetual innovation in programs and services. The Office of Innovation oversees and supports services and activities related to pre-K

through 12 standards and instruction; collects, summarizes and analyzes student data for performance, public reports and policy direction; and provides technical assistance and professional learning opportunities on innovative instructional strategies. This program has **one initiative** that may also be found on page **A-232**.

The initiative transfers one Public Service Executive II position and related All Other costs from the Leadership Team program to the Office of Innovation program with the same fund. This position works to expand partnerships with relevant individuals, associations, education organizations, and schools to secure funding and resources that help to align with the needs and resource gap areas of the department and the State of Maine education system. The related initiative is on page **A-219** reflecting the transfer into the Leadership Team program.

OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE PATHWAYS (WDIP)

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-233**. This program provides comprehensive coordination and alignment of policies, programs, resources, and initiatives of Adult Education (AE), Career and Technical Education, and Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO), Early College & Education Pathways (EPEC) to expand learning opportunities for students, maximize efficiencies, and elevate the office's collective support for Maine's workforce goals. The WDIP also collects, analyzes and reports on initiatives to provide the department, other state agencies and partners with data-informed recommendations. This program has **three initiatives** on page **A-233**.

The **first initiative** transfers one Public Service Manager II position from the Office of Workforce Development and Innovative Pathways to GPA within the same fund. This position oversees early college opportunities for high school and CTE programs. The related initiative is on page **A-213** reflecting the transfer to the GPA program.

The **second initiative** continues one limited-period Public Service Manager I position and one limited-period Management Analyst II position previously established in Public Law 2023, chapter 412 through June 30, 2027 and reduces All Other to fund the positions. Public Law 2021, chapter 635, Part X authorized the issuance of securities for equipment purchases to career and technical education centers and career and technical education regions. Pursuant to section 6 of this Part, debt service costs for bonds issued to career and technical education centers and regions must be paid by the State. This initiative continues two positions to direct, coordinate and oversee the program funds.

The **third initiative** reduces funding for debt service costs associated with the bonding authority granted in Public Law 2021, chapter 635, Part X for career and technical education centers and regions. Pursuant to section 6 of this Part, debt service costs for bonds issued to career and technical education centers and regions must be paid by the State. Funding authorized for this purpose was \$20 million, however applications for funds were less than anticipated, reducing the original estimate for debt service costs on these bonds.

PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-234**. The fund was established as a nonlapsing fund within the department to provide funding for general education and special education and related services for children eligible under Part B, Section 619. This program has **one initiative** that is also on page **A-234**.

This initiative provides \$1,000,000 in fiscal year 2027 pursuant to public Law 2023, chapter 643 to continue support for special education and related services for preschool children 3 to 5 years of age. Public Law 2023, chapter 643 established the Preschool Special Education Program Fund as a nonlapsing fund within the department to provide funding for general education and special education and related services for children eligible under Part B, Section 619 of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Beginning in fiscal year 2024-25, school administrative units that have assumed responsibility for child find activities and for ensuring free, appropriate public education for children eligible under Part B, Section 619 are eligible to receive allocations from the fund. This initiative provides ongoing funding to continue support of special education and related services for preschool children 3 to 5 years of age.

RETIRED TEACHERS GROUP LIFE INSURANCE

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-235**. The Retired Teachers Group Life Insurance General Fund program provides funding for group life insurance benefits for Maine's retired teachers. This program has **one initiative** that is also on page **A-235**.

This initiative provides General Funds of \$56,067 in fiscal year 2026 and \$194,913 in fiscal year 2027 for group life insurance for retired teachers. This funding request is based on actuarial estimates calculated by the Maine Public Employees Retirement System.

RETIRED TEACHERS HEALTH INSURANCE

The **baseline budget** request is on page **A-235**. The Retired Teachers' Health Insurance General Fund program provides funding for health insurance benefits for Maine's retired teachers. There are no new initiatives for this program.

SCHOOL AND STUDENT SUPPORTS (O3S)

The **baseline** budget for this program is on page **A-236**. This program strives to ensure that Maine schools are inclusive, healthy, safe, and supportive communities where every student thrives. O3S endeavors to coordinate resources and programs that promote equitable, psycho-socially, physically and environmentally healthy school communities for all. Each O3S team provides information and guidance to parents, administrators, educators, legislators and other stakeholders within their focus areas. This program includes General Fund, Federal Expenditures Fund and Other Special Revenue Funds that are derived from the Dropout & Truancy Education Trust. It has **four initiatives** on pages **A-236** to **A-237**.

The **first initiative** continues and makes permanent a Public Service Coordinator I position that provides administrative support to the MSSC team, reduces All Other funding and eliminates a vacant State Education Representative position. The Public Service Coordinator I position serves as the Administrative Operations Manager to assist the Maine School Safety Center (MSSC) Director with internal operations and administrative functions within the office. This initiative also eliminates a State Education Representative position. The related initiative is on page **A-227** reflecting the transfer into the Maine School Safety Center program.

The **second initiative** provides an increase in the federal allocation of \$35,549 in fiscal year 2026 and \$28,116 in fiscal year 2027 to bring allocations in line with the grant award for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth grant.

*The **third initiative** provides funding for the approved reclassification of one Education Specialist III position to a State Education Representative position and provides funding for related All Other costs. This position serves as the subject matter and policy expert on school enrollment requirements for schools, the department and other agencies and families/communities throughout the state. (Appendix A)*

The **fourth initiative** reduces General Funds by \$1,500,000 in each year of the biennium for a 2-year pilot program to help students avoid homelessness that ended on June 30, 2024.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

The **baseline** budget for this program is on page **A-238**. This program provides leadership, technical assistance and financial support necessary to maintain and strengthen the state's pre-K through grade 12 public education infrastructure. Programs include Major Capital School Construction, School Revolving Renovation Fund, Leased Space, Federal Facility Grants and Facilities Inventory. It has **two initiatives** that are also on page **A-238**.

The **first initiative** transfers one Interdisciplinary Instruction Specialist position from the School Facilities program, Other Special Revenue Funds to the Innovative Teaching and Learning program, General Fund and provides funding for related All Other costs. This position serves as an Integrated Literacy Specialist to lead targeted interventions and support strategies that can elevate literacy outcomes across all grade levels. The related initiative is on page **A-217** reflecting the transfer to the Innovative Teaching and Learning program.

The **second initiative** provides funding to establish one Public Service Coordinator II position and related All Other costs. This position will serve as an Architect Engineer and is essential to completing School Construction team objectives and is critical in the implementation of increased energy efficiency standards and building codes and state carbon reduction goals.

SCHOOL FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-239**. The School Finance and Operations Team is responsible for distribution of over \$1 billion in General Purpose Aid for Local Schools via the Essential Programs and Services funding model; ensuring adherence to, and providing technical assistance on school finance statutes; oversight of data collection systems across the department; development and maintenance of a longitudinal data warehouse; providing technology support for department personnel; and fiscal oversight of child nutrition programs, including the School Breakfast Program. It has **four initiatives** on pages **A-239** and **A-240**.

*The **first initiative** provides \$341,744 in each year of the biennium for statewide technology services provided by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Office of Information Technology. Maine IT is responsible for the delivery of safe, secure, and high-performing networks and systems to State Agencies for daily performance of their missions for the citizens of Maine. Maine IT expenses are higher due to negotiated and benefit changes to Personal Services as well as increases in operational costs. This internal service fund was*

established to recoup their costs through billings to departments and agencies for services provided. This recoupment process results in increased billing rates.
(Appendix B)

The **second initiative** transfers and reallocates the cost of one Public Service Coordinator I position and related All Other costs from the School Finance and Operations Program to the Leadership Team program within the same fund. This position serves as the department's subject matter expert on records management, maintenance and governance and is the liaison between the department and other state offices including Maine IT and Maine State Archives. The related initiative is on page **A-219** reflecting the transfer into the Leadership Team program.

The **third initiative** provides General Funds of \$1,800,387 in fiscal year 2026 and \$4,101,781 in fiscal year 2027 pursuant to Public Law 2021, chapter 398, Part OOOO to pay the difference between the federal reimbursement for a free breakfast or lunch and the full price of a breakfast or lunch for each student that attends a public school and for publicly funded students that attend an eligible private school that participates in the national School Lunch Program. This initiative provides funding for the projected cost of student meals in fiscal years 2026 and 2027.

*The **fourth initiative** provides funding for the approved reclassification of one Office Specialist I position to a Secretary Specialist position. This position provides technical and administrative assistance to Child Nutrition state agency staff as well as Federal United States Department of Agriculture Child Nutrition Programs in Maine. The programs include National School Lunch Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Service Program.*
(Appendix A)

SCHOOL MEAL EQUIPMENT AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT FUND

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-241**. This program provides one-time funds for grants to eligible school administrative units to purchase school kitchen and cafeteria equipment, improve food safety in school kitchens and cafeterias, reimburse food costs related to medically necessary dietary restrictions of students, and support the maintenance and expansion of the National School Lunch Program and the federal School Breakfast Program within the school administrative units. There are no new initiatives for this program.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS COUNCIL

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-241**. The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Council funds the executive staff to provide leadership and management expertise to assist the council in carrying out its statutory duty to enhance STEM education from pre-K through post-secondary education. The Other Special Revenue Funds request is \$500 for each year of the biennium. This was the base allocation when the program was established. There are no new initiatives for this program.

SPECIAL SERVICES TEAM

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-242**. The Special Services Team provides leadership, management, coordination and supervision of programs and services provided in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to children with disabilities birth to 21 years old. This program includes the General Fund and Federal Expenditures Fund. It has **one initiative** that may also be found on page **A-242**.

This initiative provides an allocation of \$5,890,159 in fiscal year 2026 and \$5,732,497 in fiscal year 2027 to align the allocation with available resources for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B grant. The objective of this grant is to assist states in providing special education and related services to all children with disabilities.

STATE MANDATE REIMBURSEMENT - COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-243**. This program is managed by the School Finance team in order to determine eligibility and distribute funds to those SAUs that are eligible and request reimbursement of 90% of legal and other costs to meet and engage in collective bargaining. There are no new initiatives for this program.

STATE MANDATE REIMBURSEMENT – WATER BOTTLE FILLING STATIONS

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-243**. This program provides one-time funds to reimburse school administrative units for 90% of the cost of installing water bottle filling stations when constructing a new public school building or undergoing a substantial renovation to an existing school building in fiscal year 2025 only. There are no new initiatives for this program.

TEACHER RETIREMENT

The **baseline budget** for this program is on page **A-244**. The Maine Public Employees Retirement System (MainePERS) provides retirement benefits for Maine's educators. This General Fund program has **one initiative** on page **A-244** that provides funding for the increase in teacher retirement costs based on projections from MainePERS.

This initiative provides General Funds of \$11,412,047 in fiscal year 2026 and \$17,798,648 in fiscal year 2027. The expenditure forecast for the 2026-2027 biennium for teacher retirement primarily consists of the required unfunded actuarial liability (UAL) payment established by the actuarial valuation performed by MainePERS and assumes projected teacher salary and wage growth of 2.75% for state-funded positions at Career and Technical Education Regions. The sum of these two employer retirement cost components forms the basis for the forecast for teacher retirement expenditures.

LANGUAGE

PART C

Part C is on pages **1 – 6**. This Part establishes the total cost of education from pre-kindergarten through grade 12 for fiscal year 2025-26, the state contribution, the annual target state share percentage and the mill expectation for the local contribution for fiscal year 2025-26.

PART EE

Part EE is on page **71**. This Part directs a portion of fees collected for educator credentialing to cover the annual cost of New England Board of Higher Education dues.

PART HH

Part HH is on page **71**. This Part changes the name of the Learning Systems Team program to the Federal Programs Team program.

PART II

Part II is on page **72**. This Part authorizes the State Controller to transfer \$45,000,000 from the Education Stabilization Fund and \$2,214,574 from the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services within the Department of Education to the unappropriated surplus of the General Fund on or before June 30, 2026.

PART JJ

Part JJ is on page 72. This Part lapses \$10,000,000 of unencumbered balance forward from the Department of Education, General Purpose Aid for Local Schools, General Fund account to the unappropriated surplus of the General Fund in fiscal year 2025-26.

PART KK

Part KK is on page 72 - 73. This Part authorizes the transfer of \$21,000,000 in unencumbered balance forward from the General Purpose Aid for Local Schools program to the Preschool Special Education Program Fund within the Department of Education.

It has been my honor to present this testimony, and we appreciate your time this afternoon.

APPENDIX A: Reclasses/Reorgs/Range Changes

Civil Service Rules require the Director of the Bureau of Human Resources to maintain the classification plan and establish the processes and procedures with which to do so. There is a long-standing process in place to evaluate proper classification of positions and determine through a functional job analysis whether a position meets the requirements for reclassification, including any pay adjustment. The State's collective bargaining unit agreements include negotiated language related to this process. Actions may include changing classification or keeping the same classification, but changing pay range (usually referenced in blippie as range change). Requests may be employee initiated (usually referred to as reclass) or management initiated (usually referred to as reorganization). Approved employee-initiated actions include a retroactive pay component back to the date the request was signed. Reclass/reorg/range change initiatives in Part A of the budget are necessary to fund these approved actions, which is required before the action can be processed and paid. Reclass initiatives in Part B are self-funded.

Page	Program	Fund	FY26 Amount	FY27 Amount
A-212	0308	GF	2,570	2,645
A-212	0308	GF	-	-
A-218	Z077	GF	2,570	2,643
A-218	Z077	GF	8,299	9,030
A-228	Z293	GF	14,686	20,742
A-237	Z270	GF/OSR	8,577	8,923
A-240	Z078	GF	7,542	7,830

APPENDIX B: Centralized Services

The Department of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS) develops, delivers, and maintains centralized government systems that support the financial, human resource, physical and technological infrastructure of state government. The services are billed to agencies through Internal Service Funds

All components of an internal service fund, including staff, All Other and capital, are included in Internal Service Fund budgeting. Personal Services increases the result of collective bargaining, or any other Personal Services action, as well as increases to All Other costs for various reasons, including vendor increases or supply chain costs, etc. impact these budgets. Internal Service Funds are meant to recover the costs of providing the service. DAFS bills agencies for these services and the agencies pay the bills with All Other funds.

In this biennial budget, DAFS has adjusted these rates for all of the reasons outlined above, but primarily the result of significant collective bargaining efforts approved by the Governor and Legislature. Agency All Other funds are not increased in the baseline to reflect the increased costs of the Internal Service Funds, so statewide all agencies will include initiatives for additional All Other to cover these services.

DAFS Centralized Services Internal Service Funds include:

- Service Centers within DAFS provide centralized accounting, payroll, budgeting and human resources services to departments and agencies.
- MaineIT is responsible for the delivery of safe, secure, and high-performing networks and systems to State Agencies for daily performance of their missions for the citizens of Maine. IT enterprise functions benefitting all state agencies are managed through this office to ensure consistency, volume discount efficiencies, and optimum performance and throughput.
- Central Fleet Management (CFM) within DAFS centrally procures, distributes and disposes of passenger and light truck vehicles. CFM handles many aspects of vehicle service including writing vehicle specifications, ordering vehicles, providing drivers with maintenance schedules, service assistance, fueling resources, insurance protection, and accident information processing.

- The Division of Risk Management within DAFS provides high quality insurance, loss control and claims services to all state agencies, the State's higher education institutions and some quasi-state agencies at the lowest possible cost.
- The Division of Leased Space manages leases encompassing office, warehouse, garage, storage, tower, classroom, mixed-use, and training spaces.
- Central Services within DAFS provides a wide range of mail services, including interoffice mail, as well as disposition of state surplus materials and equipment no longer needed by the state agency that purchased them. This group also manages federal surplus property.

Page	Program	Service	Fund	FY26 Amount	FY27 Amount
A-212	0308	MaineIT	GF	572,450	572,450
A-218	Z077	Service Center	GF	36,979	283,375
A-219	Z077	Risk Management	GF	20,906	20,906
A-239	Z078	MaineIT	GF	341,744	341,744

APPENDIX C: Allocation Adjustments

Adjusts funding to align with revenue projections from the December 1, 2024
Revenue Forecast Committee forecast.

Page	Program	FY26 Amount	FY27 Amount
A-213	0308	625,499	1,266,635
A-213	0308	(1,429,535)	(1,380,256)