

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and other members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs committee, and
Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and other Esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Ina Demers and I am an ESOL teacher at East End Community School in Portland, that's English to Speakers of Other Languages, and I live in Wiscasset.

I am here today to testify in support of the Governor's proposed budget for Pre K - 12 public schools in Maine. The Governor's proposal maintains the State's 55% commitment to public schools with an additional state investment to make sure our towns have the resources to meet students' needs.

There are many positive elements in the Governor's budget proposal including, but not limited to:

- **Maintaining the 55% state funding for PUBLIC SCHOOLS,**
- **Maintaining FREE MEALS FOR ALL STUDENTS IN PRE K - 12 SCHOOLS.**
- **PROVIDING an additional 4% increase each year for the UMaine System and the Community College system**
- **Making permanent the free community college program and dedicates another \$7 million to keep this**

thriving so our children can have the education they deserve to serve the communities in Maine.

Having said all that, there are real needs that our schools are struggling with and as property taxes already bearing much of the brunt for funding schools, we must turn to the state for additional help and support!!

While we fully appreciate the Governor's proposal, there are certainly areas where it needs to be added, including, but again not limited to:

1. WORKFORCE SHORTAGES:

- **A new minimum teacher salary of \$50,000 to better our chances of recruiting more professionals**
- **Better mentoring programs with significant stipends of \$5,000/year for mentor teachers.**
- **Paid student teaching programs.**

2. Mental health support for students!

3. Continue the DEI programming from the DOE with training to support students and educators who speak other languages!

Thank you for this opportunity to speak in front of you and I hope that you will support and recommend the additional points that I made here.