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Martin Grohman - Biddeford  
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Mark Dion - Portland  
Penelope York - Rockland  
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MAINE MAYORS COALITION  
Strengthening Our Cities & Our State

Jodi MacPhail - Saco  
Becky Brink - Sanford  
Richard Matthews - South Portland  
Michael Morris - Waterville  
David Morse - Westbrook

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### **Maine Mayors Coalition Testimony on LD 71 An Act Regarding Special Education Funding**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, the Maine Mayors Coalition is providing testimony in support of LD 71, An Act Regarding Special Education Funding.

The Maine Mayors Coalition is a nonpartisan group representing the mayors of eleven Maine communities – Auburn, Bangor, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, Rockland, Saco, Sanford, South Portland, Waterville and Westbrook – and nearly 300,000 residents. The Coalition advocates on behalf of our citizens and municipalities for policies that recognize the vital services Maine cities provide and the positive impact Maine cities have on our state. The Coalition seeks to work in partnership with state and federal elected officials to meet the needs of Maine people.

Our cities are committed to providing the best education possible to each and every one of our students. One of the most important obligations we have as public officials is to prepare them for the future. We appreciate the Legislature's commitment to a strong education system and to fully funding the state's 55 percent share of K-12 costs.

We respectfully ask you to extend Maine's commitment by also covering 55 percent of the special education costs under the essential program and services school funding formula as proposed in LD 71.

You're well aware that costs for these programs have risen dramatically. Municipalities providing special education in their school systems struggle to find qualified special education staff and then must pay increased costs for salaries, health care and other benefits. Municipalities providing special education through private schools are seeing transportation shortages and higher tuition fees compounded by the recently imposed directive that payments are required for an entire year as opposed to only the days students attend.

Increasing the state share of special education funding would help cities and towns across Maine continue to meet our obligation to deliver a quality education to all students and to bring property tax relief to homeowners and businesses. Please give every consideration to supporting LD 71.

Thank you for your time and attention.