



49 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330  
Telephone: (207) 622-3473 Fax: (207) 626-2968  
Website: [www.msmaweb.com](http://www.msmaweb.com)



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 181

### AN ACT TO MODIFY THE CALCULATION OF PUPIL COUNTS USED FOR DETERMINATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT OPERATING COSTS

February 26, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Robbie Feinberg, the director of communications and government relations for Maine School Management Association, speaking on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in strong support of L.D. 181, An Act to Modify the Calculation of Pupil Counts Used for Determination of School Administrative Unit Operating Costs.

This policy is nearly identical to an amended bill crafted by the previous Legislature's Education Committee. It was crafted in a bipartisan manner, received a unanimous committee vote in support, passed the House and Senate, and only died because it was caught up in the chaos of the final few days of the session.

We are glad that Rep. Tuell has introduced this measure again. We believe it would provide more financial stability to our local school districts, and we urge you to support it.

Fluctuating enrollment is a constant issue for our schools. In determining the amount of state funding a district will receive, the state's school funding formula looks at "the average of the pupil counts for October 1st of the 2 most recent calendar years." Our school leaders feel this approach is not sufficient at responding to changing student enrollment and adequately meeting student needs.

Many districts – particularly those in smaller, more rural areas, may experience a large enrollment drop from one year to the next, resulting in a decrease in state support. To preserve programming and staff, these districts must turn to their local taxpayers to make up the difference.

Other districts, meanwhile, have seen substantial enrollment increases. More students need support. But these districts think the current, two-year averaged count doesn't get funding to these students quickly enough.

This bill proposes a solution that we think would support districts in both of these circumstances. By allowing a district to use the *greater* of its latest October 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment count, *or* the average count of the three most recent calendar years, districts would be partially insulated from the financial impacts of a sudden, rapid drop in enrollment, while also more quickly receiving state support if they see more students.

We know that school funding can vary from year to year, and this bill would offer schools a level of financial assurance and stability. We view it as a positive step, and we hope you support it.

However, the original version of this bill from the previous legislative session also aspired to address another challenge: the fact that our current funding formula – with its single, October 1<sup>st</sup> pupil count – does not take into account the many students who enroll *after* October 1<sup>st</sup>, and does not provide any funding for them. Our members would be eager to work with your committee to find improved methods to more accurately count these additional students throughout the year and ensure they receive the proper state funding and support.

While this legislation does not tackle that particular challenge, our associations still view it as a positive step towards improving school funding. We hope you recognize the bipartisan effort to reach agreement around this proposal, and we urge you to vote “ought to pass” on L.D. 181.

Thank you, and we look forward to answering any of your questions.