



STATE OF MAINE
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February 26, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Senate Chair
Representative Murphy, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

L.D. 193, An Act to Fund Students in Maine Who are Experiencing Homelessness proposes changes to the EPS system that would provide greater financial resources to schools based on their population of students experiencing homelessness. L.D. 193 would grant a new funding weight of .50 per student experiencing homelessness, defined as a student identified by the school administrative unit (SAU) as a homeless child or youth, as defined by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 United States Code Section 11434a.

Students lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence must be identified by an SAU's homeless liaison and data collected in the SAU's Student Information System (SIS) for annual reporting to the Maine Department of Education (DOE). Identification can occur at any time during the calendar year as homelessness can impact families and youth at any time and effects rural, urban, and suburban areas. Once a student is identified as experiencing homelessness under the Federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the student carries homeless status in the SIS and has access to McKinney-Vento provisions through June 30th of that school year. Beginning on July 1, homeless liaisons at the SAUs are then tasked with outreach to connect with families previously identified as homeless to determine if they remain in unstable housing.


The current Essential Programs and Services (EPS) school funding model is designed to fund SAUs based on the collection of student data and specific demographic criteria on a specific date in time in order to be able to provide those funds as equitably as possible. Each year the collection of all student data used in the school funding formula is on October 1st. It would be difficult to correctly account for and allocate necessary funds using the EPS formula for the homeless students in Maine, given that students can be identified at any time during the school year, or transition into stable housing at any time during that school year. Pupil counts conducted on October 1st would not capture an accurate picture of students experiencing homelessness over the course of the school year.

Maine's commitment to funding 55% of the total state-level cost of education, as opposed to 55% of the district-by-district cost of education, means that making any small change to EPS has ripple-effects that impact every SAU in the state. By providing additional funding to SAUs that serve a greater percentage of youth experiencing homelessness, there are other communities in the State that will receive less funding. These decisions must be carefully weighed.

In the 131st Legislature, L.D. 2286 directed the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) and the DOE to study the EPS model of school funding. That work is ongoing, with a report due to the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee on March 15, 2025. L.D. 193 would alter the EPS funding formula and should be considered in conjunction with the recommendations for other changes to EPS.

The Department will be available to provide additional information on L.D. 193 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

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Paula Gravelle

Director of Public School Finance