



LEWISTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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February 26, 2025

RE: LPS FUNDING POSITION

Hello Maine Delegation,

My name is Jake Langlais. I am the Superintendent of Lewiston Public Schools and President of the Western Maine Superintendents Association. I am sharing this position from my chair and in representation of the larger group from the greater Lewiston/Auburn area to the greater Oxford area up to Rangely. The schools of our region serve high percentages of students who are economically disadvantaged.

The local tax burden has reached its limit. In the last two years we have reduced by 91 staff in Lewiston alone. Passing the local portion of the school budget required three votes, hurtful reductions, and hamstrung our ability to appropriately support all students including our most vulnerable. To compound matters, better financed school systems are able to offer better wages and quality staff move to those schools to make more while serving less challenging students.

When there are shortages with Police Officers or high crime we increase wages and hire more police officers. When infrastructure of a community is failing we invest - we pave roads, work to fix bridges, improve or replace water systems etc. but for some reason there is a temptation to reduce funding or put the burden on the least resourced to invest in our children. If we want to improve outcomes, improve the skills and success of Maine's future labor force - we need to invest.

For numbers sake, Maine falls well behind most states in funding formula weights for economically disadvantaged students. Lewiston has 68.7% or 3,985 students out of 5800 and is growing based on the latest data. Think of how that breaks down in a classroom of 20 students - That is 14 economically disadvantaged students in every class of 20 and due to reductions, many classrooms are well above 20 students. The theory of smaller classroom sizes or having an Ed Tech in a class to support the differentiated needs of students is not a reality in the current budget climate yet people want more from schools through added standards, added credit requirements, added unfunded mandates, and higher expectations. How is it rational to do more with much less than our colleagues in other states? It simply is not.

I do not know if you have had a chance to see the spaces we are talking about. We ask that you visit our community to see the amazing work our staff does with so little and imagine what they could do with adequate staffing levels if funding made it possible. Sure, Covid had its impacts on everyone. It is no excuse. When we look up and find ways to navigate a mass shooting, community flooding, and the other challenges that exist in our region - we fight for our kids, staff, and community of taxpayers that had no choice but to fail a budget twice while saying we support our schools and the work we are doing but we cannot afford the increase in our property taxes. I can assure you that we do not have any coastal properties paying high property taxes while not using the school resources to float our financial needs.

This bill increases the weighted count in the school funding formula for economically disadvantaged students under the Essential Programs and Services Funding Act from 0.15 to 0.25 effective beginning fiscal year 2026-27. Increase funding for our most vulnerable. It isn't about a political affiliation. It is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

KJLanglais

K. Jake Langlais
Superintendent