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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Senator Rafferty, Co-chair
Representative Murphy, Co-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:

LD 78, An Act to Require Elementary School Students to Learn Cursive Writing, proposes that the Department of Education provide for regular instruction in and opportunities to use cursive handwriting beginning no later than grade 3. Students would then be expected to demonstrate competency by grade 5.

As indicated in Title 20-A, §2(2), the control and management of the public schools shall be vested in the legislative and governing bodies of local school administrative units, as long as those units are in compliance with appropriate state statutes. This longstanding policy of local control provides school administrative units (SAUs) with the flexibility to make curriculum decisions based on student needs, instructional priorities, and available resources.

Educators and school boards are in the best position to determine how handwriting, including cursive, fits into a comprehensive literacy curriculum. The Maine Department of Education provides guidance and resources to support literacy instruction but does not prescribe specific instructional methods.

Maine educators consistently express concern about the increasing number of content requirements and assessments that must fit within limited instructional time. Decisions about how best to allocate instructional time are made locally, by school boards and SAU leaders, who carefully consider the needs, priorities, and values of their communities. Mandating new state-level requirements limits local flexibility and reduces the ability of schools to make difficult but necessary choices about how to structure learning in ways that best serve their students. By keeping these curriculum decisions at the local level, SAUs can ensure that instructional time is used effectively and equitably to support a well-rounded educational experience.

The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 78 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

Beth Lambert
Chief Teaching and Learning Officer