



STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
23 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

JANET T. MILLS  
GOVERNOR

PENDER MAKIN  
COMMISSIONER

February 27, 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:

LD 543, An Act to Enhance Wildlife Conservation Efforts and Preserve Sporting Heritage by Making the Elements of a Hunter Safety Course a Part of Public School Curriculum, proposes to require elements of Maine hunter safety to be taught no later than grade 9 in public and private schools. Successful completion will result in issuance of Maine hunter safety certification.

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 policy of "local control" provides communities with a stronger voice in critical decisions in how education is to be provided. Under this statute the State cannot specify courses, content, or programs to be taught in schools.

While local control allows communities to incorporate subjects such as hunter safety into their curriculum if they determine it aligns with their priorities, state-mandated curriculum requirements set a precedent that can erode local decision-making over time. If the State assumes the power to require specific courses, it opens the door for future mandates that may not reflect the priorities or needs of all communities, shifting authority to make curriculum decisions away from the local educators, school boards, and families – those who best understand the unique context of their schools – toward broader, one-size-fits-all policies dictated at the state level.

Local decision-making ensures that schools can thoughtfully balance state standards with community values, resources, and student needs, rather than prescriptive state mandates.

The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 543 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

Beth Lambert  
Chief of Teaching and Learning