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Senator, District 22

THE MAINE SENATE  
132nd Legislature

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Augusta, Maine 04333

**Testimony of Senator James D. Libby  
Sponsor of L.D. 370, "An Act to Raise the Minimum State Standard for Mathematics Education  
for a High School Diploma"**

Public Hearing, Thursday, February 27, 2025  
Cross Building, Room 220

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Jim Libby, and I am a State Senator representing Senate District # 22, comprised of the towns of Naples, Sebago, Baldwin, and Standish in Cumberland County; Hiram and Porter in Oxford County; and, Limington, Limerick, Cornish, Parsonsfield, Newfield, Acton, and Shapleigh, in the County of York.

It is my honor to bring to your attention the contents of L.D. 370, "An Act to Raise the Minimum State Standard for Mathematics Education for a High School Diploma."

Committee members, I'd like to begin by discussing the purpose for bringing you a bill of this nature.

While all of you know that there are many issues that this committee is charged to solve, there may be no more important curricular issue on our agenda than the question of what to do about quantitative literacy in the State of Maine.

You know the direction of current longitudinal data on test scores in this State. You have learned about the extraordinary amount of scaffolding in higher education that is required in our community colleges, university system, and the independent colleges. What does that say about birth to grade 12 success in teaching and learning? From reteaching basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, to supporting the learning of calculus, the cost shift to colleges that is clearly occurring today actually needs to shift in the opposite direction in order to improve education outcomes of the citizenry. This is especially true because of the large number of high school graduates who never go on to college.

We need to do something to improve analytical reasoning skills in Maine. The importance of understanding quantitative methods has never been greater, particularly in light of the coming A.I. revolution. More data on more parts of society will be available to capitalize on, and citizens prepared in mathematics and quantitative reasoning will be in the best position to do so.

We need to raise the minimum standards for high school graduation. We need to provide financial support to fund new faculty requirements.

A comparison of Maine to the top states in education yielded part of the problem, which this bill addresses. By way of example, the MassCore program includes the following minimums to be college and career ready as compared to Maine:

1. four years of English; SAME AS Maine
2. four years of mathematics; MAINE IS 2 YEARS
3. three years of lab-based science; MAINE IS ONE YEAR OF LAB STUDY
4. three years of history; MAINE IS TWO YEARS
5. two years of the same foreign language; SAME
6. one year of an arts program; and SAME
7. five additional "core" courses such as business education, health, and/or technology.

The argument that we hear from the Maine Department of Education is that this is a problem that should be left to the local level. In this particular case I must admit that strategy has not worked. Why do other successful states set higher baseline requirements than we do? And why have they experienced success? There must be a correlation.

For far too long, we in Maine have emphasized the soft skills. Kids know what the base requirements are for mathematics, and the kids that fall through the cracks in this area of literacy are the very kids who are dragging down state performance metrics. Let's set a standard in mathematics that we can all be proud of. If it were me alone, I would set the standard to earn a high school diploma at 4 years. This bill sets it at three, meeting the problem in the middle, raising the state standard but letting the local school units finish the job.

I want to thank other members of this committee for cosponsoring this bill, particularly my colleague Senator Rafferty. He and I have spoken many times over the years about low math scores. We both believe that now is the time to support change.

Thanks to the Committee. Are there any questions?