



Maine Education Association

Jesse Hargrove President | Beth French Vice President | Jaye Rich Treasurer
Rebecca Cole NEA Director | Rachelle Bristol Executive Director

Testimony

In Opposition to

LD 512 An Act to Provide Educational Opportunities for Students in Secondary Schools with 200 or Fewer Students

March 12, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Jesse Hargrove, I am a high school social studies teacher on leave serving as President of the Maine Education Association representing 24,000 members ranging from pre-k through higher education. I write in opposition to *LD 512 An Act to Provide Educational Opportunities for Students in Secondary Schools with 200 or Fewer Students*. This act will destabilize many of our rural and remote school districts, and favor families with means, and further drain resources from local communities.

Our mission should be to ensure that ALL students in all schools are provided with opportunities to meet personal development, transitional, educational, and career goals. While population shifts in our communities are normal, this would inject additional complications that would impact approximately 20% of Maine's public high schools, leaving them vulnerable to erratic student population shifts. It would make staffing and budgeting decisions for administrators and school committees even more challenging, furthermore the bill lacks provisions for students who decide to return to their local community school after the staffing and budget decisions have been made.

This bill disproportionately advantages families whose personal and professional lives provides for the flexibility to transport. Without a provision for transportation, only parents who have the time and the means to bring their students to and from school, in addition to any extracurricular activities. Meanwhile, students from families without that flexibility will remain in a diminished school.

Our schools also serve as community centers for our smaller towns that lack other facilities. Schools bring people together for musical and theatrical performances, athletic events, and a variety of community functions. When towns people invest in their schools, they invest in their community. However, this bill would threaten that vested interest. Parents who have access to outside schools and community resources would have an individual interest to vote down school and municipal budgets to reduce local property taxes, depriving all of the community benefit.

This bill is also unnecessary. High schools already across the state are already making a variety of local partnerships and arrangements to expand opportunities for all students, including collaboration for athletics, or exchanges with neighboring districts to broaden course offerings for both districts. These partnerships maintain investments and connection in our communities, while expanding student opportunities. Students can also pursue opportunities through a variety of Career and Technical Education offerings as well as Early College programs offered through Maine's Universities and

35 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330 | 1349 Broadway, Bangor, ME 04401
7 Hatch Drive, Suite 220, Caribou, ME 04736 | 29 Christopher Toppi Drive, South Portland ME 04106

207-622-5866 | 207-888-2070 fax | www.maineaa.org

Community Colleges. All without destabilizing their local school district. I urge you to vote against LD 512.