

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 55

AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAW GOVERNING THE ACCRUAL
OF EARNED PAID LEAVE

March 19, 2025

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Labor Committee. I am Steven Bailey, executive director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 55 for several reasons.

Maine's educators and school staff already receive comprehensive benefits through collective bargaining agreements, making the provisions proposed in L.D. 55 unnecessary. These existing benefits include:

- Teachers accrue sick leave that can accumulate up to 125 days, ensuring ample security for illness or other health-related needs.
- Educators have access to 12 weeks of paid family medical leave, allowing them to take time off for significant life events such as the birth of a child or caring for a family member.
- Many teachers are also provided with personal days, offering additional flexibility to address personal matters.

These robust benefits demonstrate Maine school districts' strong commitment to supporting their employees. The proposed changes in L.D. 55 would add redundant provisions that are not needed given the current protections and leave policies in place.

The bill's requirement that accrued and unused hours of paid leave from the previous year be carried forward, without impacting the total accrual limit for the following year, would impose additional financial and administrative challenges on school districts. These include:

- Increased costs for school districts, which are already managing limited budgets and struggling to fund essential programs and resources for students.
- Additional administrative burdens in tracking and managing leave balances, which could divert resources away from student-focused initiatives.
- The practice currently used by school districts to plan for expected employee absences under Earned Paid Leave.

Allowing unlimited accrual of these days would make it more difficult to budget and secure substitute teachers, further straining district operations.

Consistent teacher-student relationships and uninterrupted instruction are critical for student success. Changes that allow greater leave accumulation and carryover could lead to increased disruptions in the classroom, negatively impacting student achievement.

- Allowing accrued leave from prior years to be carried forward without counting against the subsequent year's accrual limits may lead to longer or more frequent absences.
- Increased teacher absences would require schools to rely more heavily on substitute teachers, reducing the consistency and quality of instruction for students.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote **against** L.D. 55. The current system already provides strong benefits for educators while maintaining financial sustainability and instructional stability for school districts. The proposed changes would introduce unnecessary costs and administrative challenges, ultimately to the detriment of Maine's students and schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.