



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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March 25, 2025

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF:

**LD 218 “An Act to Make Student Transfer Agreements Renew  
Automatically Except in Certain Circumstances”**

THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL  
AFFAIRS

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Representative Amy Arata, I live in New Gloucester, and I’m testifying in support of LD 824 “*An Act to Make Student Transfer Agreements Renew Automatically Except in Certain Circumstances.*”

We know that children do better with consistency and predictability, with familiar surroundings, friends, and teachers. In fact, anytime a child enters the court system, this is taken into consideration as custody is determined. Yet in Maine, this stability can be disrupted when children are removed from the only school they’ve ever known. They have to leave all their friends and familiar teachers and staff behind, based on the authority of one school superintendent. This bill aims to change this for well-behaved children who already have a superintendent agreement in place.

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New Gloucester/ Gray (Part)

I have seen this problem in action. I was a member of the Maine State Board of Education in 2016 and 2017. When parents are denied a superintendent agreement, the state board is their last chance to appeal the decision. The board would meet at schools all over the state. I've seen parents take time off work, drive hours across the state, rent a hotel room, and come to the board crying and begging us to allow their child to continue a superintendent agreement. This is wrong. No Maine parent should have to demean themselves before strangers just to do the right thing for their child. I'm sure that we would have had more appeal hearings if the expense and stress of such proceedings were not prohibitive to parents who don't have the financial means or public speaking ability to advocate for their children.

I wish that I could provide the committee with the records for the appeal cases that I heard, but they're strictly confidential. Board members were not allowed to keep the records. The plight of the parents and children at these hearings made an impact on me, so when I heard about this bill, I asked Rep. Hasenfus to include me as a cosponsor. I'm grateful that he was willing to put his neck out and propose this legislation. It's a good compromise to stop the injustice that I witnessed.

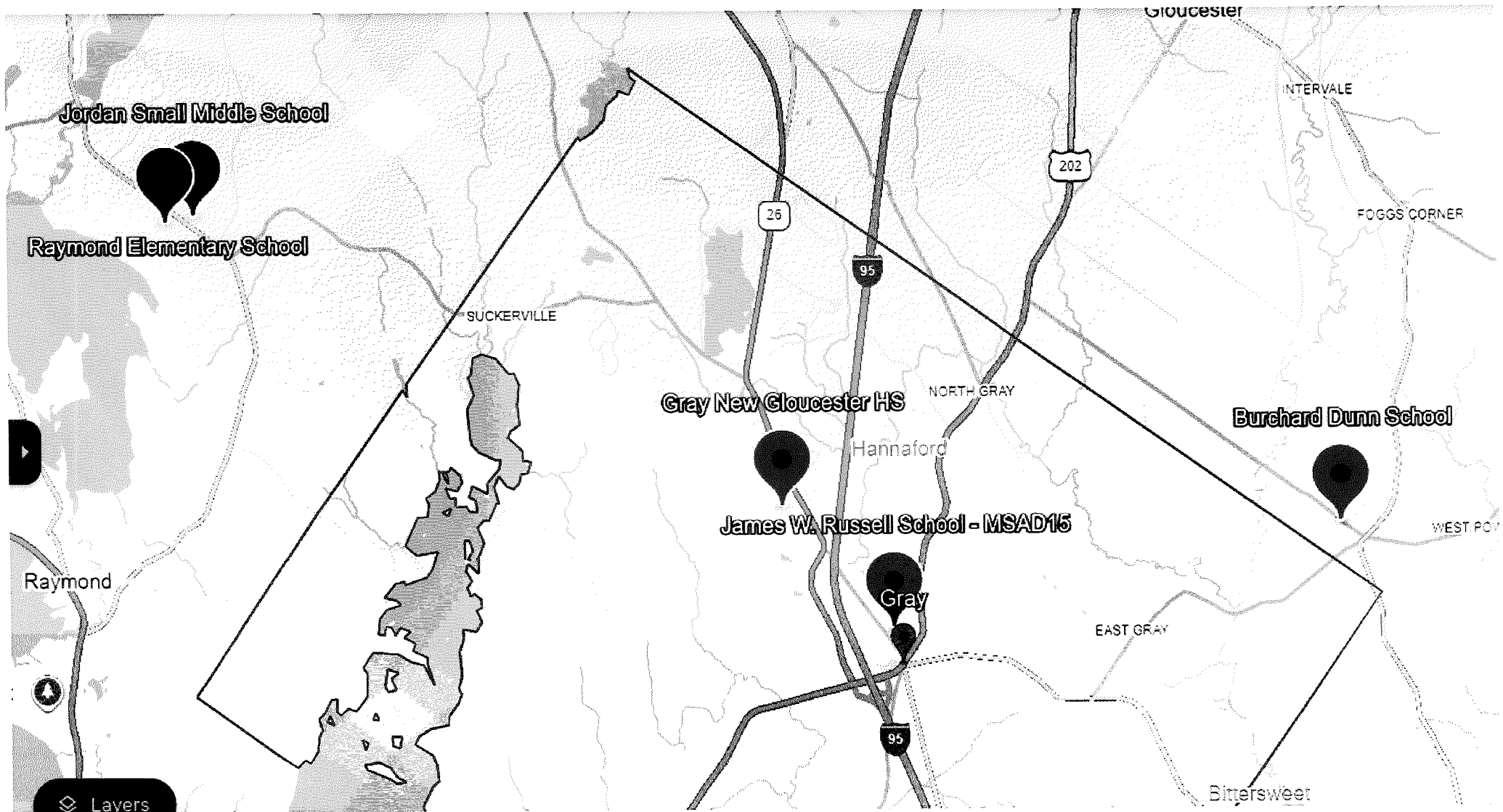
You may wonder why transfer agreements are made in the first place. If you look at the map I provided, you can see how this issue impacts my constituents in Gray. As you can see, the people to the west of Little Sebago Lake have a much easier drive to Raymond Elementary School than they do to the James W. Russell School (K-2) or the Burchard Dunn School (3-4) in New Gloucester. Right now, the superintendent agreements seem to continue in my district with no problems, but this map is representative of the types of geographical impediments that occur in Maine school districts and is a good example of why a superintendent agreement may be requested in the first place.

This bill does not require superintendents to enter into initial agreements, and allows removal of students who disrupt the education of others. It merely preserves stability for students who already have transfer agreements, and ends the yearly stress and uncertainty for students and parents. Many superintendents renew agreements yearly and put the needs of children first. However, some may end an agreement due to reasons that have nothing to do with the children. I have seen this first hand in my previous position on the Board of Education. This bill ought to pass because educational stability, regardless of their parents' wealth or abilities as advocates, is in the best interest of Maine children.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy B. Arata". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "A" and "B".

Amy B. Arata  
State Representative



Jordan Small Middle School

Raymond Elementary School

Gray New Gloucester HS

James W. Russell School - MSAD15

Burchard Dunn School

Raymond

Layers

Gloucester

INTERVALE

FOGGS CORNER

SUCKERVILLE

NORTH GRAY

Hannaford

WEST POINT

EAST GRAY

Bittersweet

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