

The Oxford Hills School District M.S.A.D. #17

Heather Manchester, Ed.D, Superintendent of Schools,
Steve Ciembroniewicz, Assistant Superintendent
Elizabeth King, Director of Student Services
Carrie Colley, Director of Finance and Operations
Jill Bartash, Director of Curriculum



232 Main Street, South Paris, ME 04281
Phone (207) 743-8972 fax (207) 743-2878
www.msad17.org

Harrison * Hebron * Norway
Otisfield * Oxford * Paris
Waterford * West Paris

March 19, 2025

Re: Testimony to the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, in support of LD 660, *An Act to Provide Transparency and Public Access to Public School Curricula*

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the committee,

My name is Heather Manchester, and I am the Superintendent of Schools for MSAD #17 in the Oxford Hills. I strongly oppose LD 660, *An Act to Provide Transparency and Public Access to Public School Curricula* because it undermines local control and imposes unnecessary burdens on local school districts.

School districts in Maine currently have policies to ensure transparency of curriculum and instruction put in place by locally elected school boards. These policies include curriculum development, selection of instructional and library materials, and standards required to graduate. These policies are carefully reviewed and adopted following transparent, public procedures. Any citizen of a school district is welcome to attend school board meetings to share their concerns about policies adopted by the local district.

LD660 proposes to make all program materials, videos, links, and resources publicly available on the websites, to make all professional development offerings open for public attendance to residents of the State, and to be posted 30 days in advance, and to make recordings to the public. Recording, storing, and maintaining access to these materials would require additional staff and resources, creating an unfunded mandate that strains already limited budgets. For example, at a recent workshop day in my district, we had over 20 professional development sessions offered for over 400 teachers. That schedule was in development until the week before. If my district had to record each of those sessions and post them to our website, staff would need to be hired. To develop the online portal as proposed would also cost money, require human resources, and take time away from working with students. Furthermore, to have any Maine citizen who is not a part of the professional staff attend school-based sessions would detract from the positive working environment that schools create for staff.

LD 660 seeks to supersede the well-established tradition of local control in Maine schools. Curriculum materials and policies are already accessible to the public through existing school board processes, which are made in public, with opportunity for public comment. Citizens of each community are welcome to engage in the democratic process specific to their local school district. Rather than improving transparency, LD 660 creates unnecessary bureaucracy, diverts valuable resources away from student learning, and usurps the authority of local school boards to make decisions that best serve their communities.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and your service to the students and educators of our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heather Manchester".

Heather Manchester

Superintendent of Schools, MSAD#17