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TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 660

AN ACT TO PROVIDE TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC ACCESS TO PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULA

April 2, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Robbie Feinberg, the director of communications and government relations for the Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 660, An Act to Provide Transparency and Public Access to Public School Curricula.

This proposal would impose an onerous, burdensome mandate on local public schools that we believe is unnecessary and would take away from the education of Maine children.

Superintendents and school districts have made it a goal in recent years to open up their schools and classrooms to the community. We are proud of the work happening inside Maine school districts, and school units are devoting more resources to ensure their curriculum, materials and other work are apparent across the community. Much of this information is already visible locally or statewide:

- School library books and materials are already available through many district websites.
- Curriculum materials selected for school use are based on the Maine System of Learning Results in all Content Areas. Many districts already post these curriculum materials online, though teachers note that they often change their curriculum materials throughout the year based on the needs of each student.
- Data from state-based assessments are available on the website for each school district as required by ESSA. The Maine DOE also has an ESSA Dashboard including extensive information on graduation rates, assessment, enrollment, and other data being sought in L.D. 660.

Locally, school districts already have policies to excuse a child from a particular course or to challenge a particular book or other instructional material. School boards and superintendents seek to work together with parents to address any of these needs and concerns. The language, as outlined in L.D. 660 would directly conflict with these locally controlled processes. It would also represent an enormous mandate that would require substantial new investments in technology, training and staffing.

This bill would require each district to “make audio and video recordings” of all professional development “accessible to the public free of charge for at least 3 years after the event date.” The language of the bill is unclear, but if this would be universally required in every Maine school district, it would be an enormous, expensive undertaking. Professional development frequently includes a combination of lectures, breakout groups, and small-group discussions. To record all aspects of every PD session would likely require several

cameras and operators – meaning schools would need to hire additional staff and spend thousands on new technology. This simply is not feasible for the vast majority of school districts.

Section 7 of this bill also requires the creation of an “online portal” in every district to serve as a “single source for all student information and data”, including all curricula, source materials and documents used to create curricula, and a list of costs, speakers and guests connected to professional development.

Again, we view this as unnecessary, as schools already provide much of this information to the public through syllabi, calendars, community releases, and they are happy to share additional information, if requested. But creating this comprehensive online database – and maintaining it throughout the year – would again require additional technological assistance and manpower. At a time when districts are considering laying off staff members because of tight local budgets, we do not want to add additional state mandates that would take money away from our classrooms and children.

Maine schools are committed to transparency and providing information on enrollment, curriculum, assessment, and other data with families and community members. However, we believe this bill would place a substantial burden that would only take away from the work happening inside our schools. For these reasons, we urge you vote “ought not to pass” on L.D. 660.

Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.