



Maine School Superintendents Association



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

OFFICERS—2024-25

L.D. 1271

AN ACT TO MAKE PERMANENT THE LAW ALLOWING SCHOOL BOARDS TO
ACCEPT THE VOLUNTEER SERVICES OF IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS
OF SUPERINTENDENTS OR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Eileen King, executive director of the Maine School Superintendents Association, testifying on behalf of the MSSA Legislative Committee in support of L.D. 1271, *An Act to Make Permanent the Law Allowing School Boards to Accept the Volunteer Services of Immediate Family Members of Superintendents or School Board Members*.

Our association has already voiced support this session for L.D. 513, which would again allow spouses of school board members to serve as stipend employees. We support L.D. 1271 for similar reasons and believe this bill should be an even more common-sense solution.

As superintendents, we want our community inside our schools. It's important for both kids and adults: students should be able to interact with a diverse range of people within their communities, and adults should get to see the amazing work happening inside Maine classrooms. Volunteer positions provide for these opportunities. Adults can share their talents or interests with children, creating valuable connections and helping students grow.

Current Maine statute unfortunately limits these opportunities for family members of school board members and superintendents. For many districts, that's okay – they can find someone else to volunteer as a coach or advisor. But in smaller and more rural communities, there is no one else to do this work. In these situations, children get less of the learning and enrichment they deserve.

Four years ago, L.D. 1323 offered a limited, three-year period that permitted family members of school officials to serve in these roles, and many communities have shared with us that this has been a success. Kids are developing connections with more adults. At a time when schools across the country are struggling to find enough volunteers, the 2021 law offered an important option to bring in more.

Importantly, districts have also shared that they are not running into issues around favoritism or conflicts-of-interest. We certainly understand those concerns, but L.D. 1323 provided for appropriate guardrails by including school board policies discouraging favoritism, political patronage, and giving priority consideration to the best interest of students.

Leading for equity, excellence and opportunity for all Maine Students

This bill would ensure that those guardrails are followed if this policy is brought back in the future. Most importantly, it would not force this practice on any district. It simply says that a school board “may, but is not required to” permit volunteers in these circumstances. This is simply providing an option for a school district to choose – if they want to.

We believe that Maine has shown, through previous laws, that it can properly balance these potential conflicts-of-interest while meeting the best interests of children, and L.D. 1271 would make that more possible for school districts across the state. We encourage your committee to vote “ought-to-pass” on L.D. 1271.