



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

JANET MILLS
GOVERNOR

PENDER MAKIN
COMMISSIONER

April 8, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Senate Chair
Representative Murphy, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 1332, An Act to Establish the Community Schools Success Fund to Ensure the Implementation and Success of Community Schools Programs, would establish the Community Schools Success Fund, a nonlapsing fund within the Department of Education, which would be utilized to provide grants to community schools, local education providers, and nonprofit organizations to support community school programs.

The Maine Department of Education (DOE) has supported the establishment and flourishing of the full-service community schools model in Maine. A community school is defined in Title 20-A, §9921 as a “public elementary or secondary school that participates in a community-based effort to coordinate and integrate educational, developmental, family, health, and other comprehensive services.” These services are available through partnerships with community-based organizations and are provided to students, families, and community members before and after school hours, during the weekend, and during the summer.

Beginning in October of 2015, the Maine DOE was permitted to provide funding to school administrative units (SAU) in which community schools were located. Priority was to be given to SAUs in which at least 40% of students were determined to be economically disadvantaged. Title 20-A, §9922 outlines the process of establishing a community school, the associated goals, and the local planning and auditing processes to be conducted by the local school board. Although many schools include “Community School” in their name, this does not necessarily mean that the SAU has designated the school as a full-service community school pursuant to MRS Title 20-A, Chapter 333.

The DOE enthusiastically supports the work of full-service community schools in Maine and is supportive of the intent of the bill to make available a stable, targeted funding stream to emerging community schools. One consideration is that, as proposed, LD 1332 does not explicitly permit funds to be used to support districts’ administrative capacity (e.g. a coordinator position) to implement the vital community engagement and coordination functions that integrate community resources into the school setting. Without this option, the Maine DOE is concerned that the functions will be dispersed across multiple existing positions responsible for other duties, thereby diluting the



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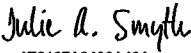
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impact of the community schools model. Maine DOE is also concerned about its capacity to provide oversight/accountability, technical support and coordination at the state level to ensure that the community school option is accessible to any district. Maine DOE further recommends that the statute specify rule-making for qualifying non-profit organizations to apply for the funds rather than specifying them in statute as qualified applicants without qualification.

The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 1332 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

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Julie Smyth
Director of Office of School and Student Supports