



Maine Education Association

Jesse Hargrove President | Beth French Vice President | Jaye Rich Treasurer
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Testimony

In Support Of

LD 1123: An Act to Provide Funding for MaineCare-related Services for Public Schools

Jan Kosinski, Government Relations Director, Maine Education Association

Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

April 9th, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Jan Kosinski, and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Maine Education Association (MEA). The MEA represents nearly 24,000 educators, including teachers and other educators in nearly every public school in the state, as well as full-time faculty and other professional and support staff in both the University of Maine and Community College systems. Thousands of retired educators continue their connection and advocacy work through the MEA- Retired program.

I offer this testimony today on behalf of the MEA in SUPPORT of LD 1123, *An Act to Provide Funding for MaineCare-related Services for Public Schools*.

This bill may seem small and insignificant, but with expected new rules from the Department of Health and Human Services this bill could have huge consequences for public schools and the students they serve.

Just yesterday many of you sat through testimony in support of two bills (LD 858 and LD 1203) designed to increase funding to provide more mental health supports to students through grant programs. You heard many hours of testimony from educators and clinicians in support with dire warnings about the overall well-being of students and the deep concerns many have based on the behaviors students are regularly exhibiting at school. This bill is another solution to the problem.

In 2014, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a state Medicaid director letter that clarified and expanded the services eligible for reimbursement from Medicaid in a school-based setting. This guidance allows school districts to get reimbursed for services beyond those required via an IEP and to pay for these services using federal funding.¹ In 2022, Congress passed and President Biden signed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) and this along with further guidance from the CMS expanded the ability for states to bill Medicaid for school-based health services, including basic screenings, “behavioral health services (e.g. mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) services), physical and occupational therapy, and disease management for chronic diseases (e.g. obesity, asthma).”²

¹ Please see, A GUIDE TO EXPANDING MEDICAID-FUNDED SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES, prepared by the Healthy Schools Campaign, found here: [A-Guide-to-Expanding-Medicaid-Funded-School-Health-Services-2022-Update.pdf](#)

² Please see, [Bipartisan Safer Communities Act | NEA](#)

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Many schools are providing many of these services already, but the cost is born by the local taxpayers. Services such as occupational therapy, mental health services, and other critical programs are offered to students, but schools rely on grants, bits of funding from the school funding formula, and local philanthropy to make these programs happen. When they do not have those sources of funding, they ask local property taxes to bear the costs. With the changes that have been made on the federal level, schools can augment these programs and bill Medicaid. Win – win.

In the past few years, twenty-five states have adjusted their State Medicaid plans to allow schools to bill Medicaid for these services including New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

We expect forthcoming rules from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to help provide necessary guidance and guardrails for schools to begin offering an expanded array of services and to tap Medicaid, not local property taxpayers to pay for these services. Many other states are already taking advantage of these changes and are now relying on a stable federal source of funding, and we are eager to see Maine do the same.

Once those rules are in place, this bill will be critical to help districts learn how to bill Medicaid and hopefully to find ways to streamline the system for schools. I am certain billing Medicaid will not be easy. I fully expect some districts will struggle. I believe the concept behind this bill is to provide expert guidance and someone for schools to call to help navigate this process. Large districts with more resources will be more adept at maximizing their reimbursement and we hope all districts, including small, rural districts, will have the capacity and resources to bill Medicaid and maximize their reimbursements as well. At a time when our state is struggling to find resources to meet pressing needs, rule changes could present a new opportunity to draw down federal resources to provide critical services that will help students learn, grow, and thrive. And this bill will help school districts in that endeavor. Again, win win.

Thank you for time and attention and your service to the people of Maine. I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.

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