

Good morning. My name is Elizabeth Andersen. I am a resident of Portland, a former high school librarian and a current elementary school librarian. I am also the current President of the Maine Association of School Libraries (MASL).

I am in full support of LD 1404. This bill would provide an opportunity for public and school librarians to find more opportunities to collaborate on the services we provide to our patrons. As a school librarian, I have a goal to create library patrons for life. I want them to use their school libraries throughout their school careers and their public libraries all throughout. In addition to teaching lessons and book checkouts, I work to create projects that demonstrate all the ways all libraries can be places of personal growth, places to meet for book groups, welcoming spaces to learn, or places to go when you may need help and don't know where else to turn. I encourage students to participate in the summer reading program hosted by our public library which prevents summer slide and continues the learning that has happened during the school year. I am fortunate to work in a community that has school and public libraries that offer all of these, but I welcome the chance to understand barriers that prevent the patrons being able to take full access of these programs and to see if there are places around the state that need more of these types of initiatives.

School librarians are teachers and curricular leaders across grade levels. We curate collections that align with and teach to the Maine Learning Results, but every year during budget season, MASL hears of school librarian positions that are eliminated. Many school libraries in our state are currently staffed by solo paraprofessionals. This working group will help us collect accurate data to share with the Maine Department of Education on school library staffing across our state and look at the impact of these decisions.

Many school libraries serve as the hub of technology in their schools and many school librarians teach the vital skills of digital citizenship. Maine is extremely lucky to have the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI), the country's largest 1:1 technology program. However, even with this amazing program the technology in school districts is not equal. I have worked in

two different districts in southern Maine and I know there can be a vast difference in digital literacy skills being taught, as well as access^{to} devices. This working group will help us collect data about access to technology and the teaching of digital literacies in school libraries in Maine which will allow us to work with our public libraries to take steps to close the digital divide between communities.

Information retrieval and evaluation is a lifelong skill that all students need. The Digital Maine Library provided by the Maine State Library is a valuable collection of research materials but at the moment, our youngest learners do not have a resource on the Digital Maine Library for research. Many districts have filled that gap by purchasing their own database, but not every district can afford this, so we end up with more of a digital divide in our state. I hope that this working group would also examine this need as well.

I urge you to support LD 1404. Strong libraries create and sustain strong communities. Thank you for your time.

Citations

“Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI).” *Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI)* | *Department of Education, 2025, www.maine.gov/doe/learning/technology/MLTI.*