

TESTIMONY NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST – MSSA
TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION – MSBA

L.D. 1097

AN ACT TO PROVIDE DE-ESCALATION AND BEHAVIOR
INTERVENTION TRAINING FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

April 23, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Steven Bailey, Executive Director of the Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association regarding L.D. 1097, which seeks to provide critical de-escalation and behavior intervention training to school personnel. Our associations agree that this type of training is a necessary part of any approach towards better managing student behavior and safety in our classrooms, but we do not think this should be mandated across the state.

I want to highlight the collaborative work currently underway between MSSA, MSBA, the Maine Education Association (MEA), and the Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) to develop and promote crisis intervention training. This partnership is grounded in our shared commitment to ensuring that Maine's educators are well-equipped to handle challenging behaviors in the classroom while maintaining a focus on the dignity and well-being of all students.

The collaboration between these organizations reflects a broad, unified effort to build a framework of best practices for training. By integrating expertise from a diverse range of educational professionals, we ensure that the training is comprehensive and responsive to the needs of our school communities. Additionally, organizations like Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) provide invaluable resources and proven methods for teaching staff how to prevent and de-escalate crisis situations in ways that prioritize both student safety and staff well-being.

We believe this approach aligns with the spirit of L.D. 1097, which would mandate training on essential topics, including positive behavior interventions, de-escalation techniques, and standards for using restraint and seclusion procedures.

This work empowers educators, reduces the use of restrictive practices, and contributes to a more positive and supportive learning environment. While valuable, we do not believe this work should be mandated – particularly without appropriate funding.

Our associations would support more state funding and resources to implement these kinds of trainings within our schools – we believe that if the state can fund and offer this work, our schools and educators would be happy to take advantage of those opportunities and implement it in our classrooms. However, this commitment must be consistent and sustained, allowing time, resources, and opportunity for school districts and educators to implement this work.