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April 25, 2025

Testimony of Representative Sophie Warren Presenting
L.D. 1624, An Act to Provide Funding for Summer School Programming
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Good morning, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and respected colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Sophie Warren, and I represent House district 124. Thank you for the opportunity to present L.D. 1624, An Act to Provide Funding for Summer School Programming.

This is a funding bill, allocating \$9.3 million dollars from the General Fund to credit recovery and summer education programming available to all school administrative units, with priority given to those with student poverty rates of 25% or higher and additional consideration for students from asset-limited and income-constrained households.

This bill comes from conversations with educators, school board members, city and town councilors and after-school programming staff about not only long-standing needs regarding reliable and sufficient funding for summer schooling, but particular about the acute fiscal realities for schools who are in a period of running out of COVID-era federal funding, but with associated needs congruent with that funding only growing.

Maine schools are facing significant financial challenges due to the expiration of federal COVID-19 relief funds¹² and ongoing federal policy uncertainty.³⁴⁵

The allocation number is modeled from an average of funding used by districts with student poverty rates of 25% or higher last year⁶ that was then adjusted for student populations of other districts based on this average. This bill is not about creating a funding solution that will meet all needs of summer school programs, related credit recovery, enrichment and intervention programs. For reference, a 2015 USM study determined that the true number of needed funding to meet student need would be \$15 mil. Accounting for inflation and cost of living, that number would be higher ten years onward. This amount merely attempts to offer a practical number to maintain existing programs, funding, staffing as during COVID.

¹ <https://www.bangordailynews.com/2023/04/14/penobscot/maine-school-covid-funding-lapse-joam40zk0w/>.

² <https://www.mainepublic.org/education-news/2024-04-25/maine-schools-say-theyre-facing-a-perfect-storm-of-expenses-that-are-pushing-up-school-budgets>.

³ <https://www.sunjournal.com/2025/03/19/federal-cuts-a-threat-to-21st-century-program-at-lewiston-schools/>.

⁴ <https://apnews.com/article/trump-maine-usda-transgender-sports-abfc3c0c63995764bed6fcee167a2509>.

⁵ <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/me/maine/education/2025/03/12/uncertainty-about-federal-funding-looms-over-portland-school-budget>.

⁶ Lewiston, Portland, and Bangor.

I want to speak briefly to the purpose and value of summer schooling for those who might be less familiar, as I was when first approached by educators surrounding the concerns that generated this bill. There is strong academic consensus that summer experiences or the lack thereof can greatly influence the academic success of students, particularly from low-income and at-risk backgrounds. These experiences can either help close or widen achievement gaps, particularly those affecting poor and minority students in the U.S.⁷⁸ Most broadly, meta-analysis of ninety-three summer programs found that, on average, students who attended summer programs performed better than about 56% to 60% of their peers who did not participate.⁹

If there is broadly speaking a shared understanding as to the immense value of summer programming, I want to move to discuss efforts taken and unmet need for Maine students.

Over the past few years, the State of Maine has made important strides on this issue, including the allocation of certain funding to support summer learning, enrichment, and credit recovery programs through various grants and initiatives that have been supported and funded by this committee and the DOE.

During the pandemic, Maine received over \$1 billion in federal relief, including nearly \$600 million for public schools. This funding supported staffing, summer programs, building renovations, and mental health services. However, as these funds have begun to expire, districts are grappling with the loss of approximately \$190 million in federal support in addition to a much more challenging budget landscape for both the state and municipalities alike.¹⁰

As a recent Maine Public article stated, “In recent years, schools have used federal COVID relief funding to help alleviate some budget challenges and even add new positions. At MSAD 54 in Skowhegan, Superintendent Jonathan Moody said the funds paid for summer programming and added more social workers and substitute teachers. But that funding is coming to an end, and Moody said his district is now facing cuts.”¹¹

According to a 2023 report¹² to this committee, summer funding comes mostly from federal sources (at least 53%), and this number at that time, being approximately \$5 million dollars, is now running out completely. According to that report, state funding amounted to a base of approximately \$1.5 million dollars.

⁷ “An Independent Review of Maine’s Essential Programs and Services Funding Act: Part 1.” Lawrence O. Picus & Associates. April 1, 2013. P. 89-91. https://picusodden.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Review_of_Maines_Essential_Programs_and_Services_Program_-_Part_1.pdf. See, Heyns, Barbara. (1978). *Summer learning and the effects of schooling*. New York: Academic Press.

⁸ Borman, Geoffrey D., & Boulay, Matthew. (Eds.). (2004). *Summer Learning: Research, policies and programs*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

⁹ Cooper, Harris, Charlton, Kelly, Valentine, Jeff C., & Muhlenbruck, Laura. (2000). Making the most of summer school: A meta-analytic and narrative review. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 65 (1, Serial No. 260).

¹⁰ <https://www.scarboroughmaine.org/budget/budget-archive>; <https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1743098387/scarboroughmaineorg/fd6zuh2it4rh7s5ieqqr/FY2026BudgetBook1ForWeb.pdf>.

¹¹ <https://www.mainepublic.org/education-news/2024-04-25/maine-schools-say-theyre-facing-a-perfect-storm-of-expenses-that-are-pushing-up-school-budgets>.

¹² <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/9538>.

As federal funds have begun to decline, in 2024, the Maine Department of Education awarded \$2.7 million in Summer Learning and Enrichment Grants to 61 schools.¹³ These programs aimed to address academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs, with a focus on underserved students and those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Maine Department of Education has made grants available for afterschool and summer learning programs through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Grants program¹⁴ with approximately \$3.5 million available for grant awards to support before-school, after-school, and summer learning programs. As just one example of the dynamic we're talking about here, in 2020-2022, that number was \$5 million and was ultimately funded through federal funding.¹⁵

So as you can see, even with all of these more recent efforts, the decline in federal funding is enormous, and so represents a dramatic step down at a time when costs have only increased alongside need from our schools of funding for summer school, credit recovery and summer enrichment programming for middle and high school administrative units.

This has led to difficult budget decisions, including potential staff layoffs and reductions in programs like summer learning and after-school services.¹⁶ Even the budget recently passed by the legislature which included an additional \$22.6 million to schools is still poised to leave many communities facing severe budget cuts.

For Lewiston, as an example, funding was approximately \$100,000 last school year for high school credit recovery programming and will be approximately \$40,000 this year. Districts are communicating the limited nature of available summer school programming, waitlists for these programs, and even discussion of a need to discontinue programming overall.

Maine students face all sorts of issues today ranging from mental health to homelessness, substance abuse, domestic and community violence and more. To succeed despite all we know they may face, they deserve we provide them the adequate funding to do so. We owe it to our youth to recognize a legitimate solution to very real problems and it is imperative to ensure that there is ample funding to secure the future of all students no matter the circumstance they're in.

I am appreciative to the many educators, parents and students who provided input on this bill, and particularly want to thank Boniface Kabongo for working so diligently in advocating for his students and in bringing this bill forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you have.

¹³ There is also a smaller program, the Summer Success Pilot Program Fund provides grants to school administrative units for summer programs. The program received an ongoing General Fund appropriation of \$243,000 per year starting in fiscal year 2021-22. The estimated annual cost per participating SAU is \$27,000, covering 90% of the program's cost.

¹⁴ <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/9526>. Between 2020 and 2022, over \$5 million of this funding came through federal government funding.

¹⁵ <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/9538>.

¹⁶ <https://www.pressherald.com/2024/01/07/maine-school-districts-worry-about-fiscal-cliff-as-pandemic-relief-money-runs-out/>.