

State of Maine
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Testimony of Beth Lambert, Chief Teaching and Learning Officer

In Support of: L.D. 1701

An Act to Support the Implementation of Learning Standards and Results in Public Schools

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Sponsored by: Rep. Brennan

Co-Sponsored by: Senator Rafferty and Representatives Cloutier, Dodge, Gramlich, Mitchell, Moonen, Murphy and Sargent

Date: April 30, 2025

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

My name is Beth Lambert, and I serve as the Chief Teaching and Learning Officer at the Maine Department of Education. I am here today representing the Department, speaking in support of the proposed amendment for L.D. 1701, An Act to Support the Implementation of Learning Standards and Results in Public Schools. This bill would direct the Department to convene a workgroup to study the system of Maine Learning Results and make recommendations for improvement.

Learning standards in the United States have changed significantly over the past several decades. Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, there was a national movement to define clear expectations for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Maine joined this effort with the establishment of the Maine Learning Results in 1995, our first statewide academic standards across multiple content areas. These standards were intended to provide clear statewide learning goals, while leaving curriculum decisions, such as instructional materials and teaching methods, to local schools and educators.

Since 1995, the Maine Learning Results have undergone several major updates: a revision in 2008, the adoption of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematic in 2011, and a full round of revision across all content areas between 2018-2020. Over this time, the standards have shifted from broad guiding frameworks to, at times, extremely detailed and specific documents. While some detail is important, overly granular standards risk being mistaken for curriculum, limiting local flexibility and innovation.

At the same time, our understanding of how students learn has continued to grow. Advances in learning science have deepened our understanding of cognitive development, motivation, and

engagement. It is critical that our state standards reflect this newer research and continue to meet the needs of Maine students and educators.

The Maine Learning Results are reviewed on a rotating basis as required by Title 20-A, Chapter 222. However, the pace of reviewing eight content areas within a five-year cycle leaves little opportunity for deeper conversations about purpose, structure, and effectiveness. It limits our ability to step back and assess whether the standards are achieving their intended purpose, supporting effective teaching and learning, and remaining aligned with both the latest research and the evolving needs of Maine's students and communities. The recent passage of LD 74 that was signed on April 11, 2025 extended our review timeline from 5 to 7 years. This additional time will allow the Maine DOE and a group of dedicated stakeholders to devote the time necessary to review and support meaningful implementation in each content area, but not the System of Learning Results as a whole.

The Department supports the proposed amendment to LD 1701 because it makes space for an important, comprehensive reflection. Convening a workgroup to study the Learning Results would allow a group of educators, experts, and curriculum leaders to look closely at the purpose of the Learning Results, ensure the structure supports local flexibility, and confirm that they are aligned with modern educational research and practice. Based on the workgroup's findings and recommendations, the Department would continue the regular review process going forward, strengthened by a clearer, and more focused vision for the Learning Results.

For these reasons, the Department of Education is in support of L.D. 1701, An Act to Support the Implementation of Learning Standards and Results in Public Schools. I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have, and I will be available for work sessions on this bill.