

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 1588

AN ACT TO ENSURE TRANSPARENCY IN STUDENT TRANSFER REQUESTS

May 6, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Robbie Feinberg, the director of communications and government relations for Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 1588, An Act to Ensure Transparency in Student Transfer Requests.

While we appreciate this bill's effort to promote more transparency in the student transfer request process, we believe it is impractical and will only represent a substantial administrative burden on both the state and local levels.

First of all, both the Department of Education and local school districts already have numbers on student transfer requests (amount of requests, amount approved or denied, etc.). These are already available, if requested by the public, and would appear to satisfy part of what this measure is looking to achieve.

However, L.D. 1588 would further demand that local school districts share with the state "the number of transfers accepted, state the number of transfers denied, include the written description for each denial and specify for each transfer request presented whether the school administrative unit was requested to send or receive the student requesting the transfer." The commissioner would then publish a de-identified list of this information.

Taking this step would be an enormous amount of work for both school districts and the state. There is a reason student transfer request information is not shared publicly – it contains enormously sensitive details about students' and families' medical information, personal family history, and deeply personal information on bullying and other traumatic experiences.

De-identifying this data would likely require review by multiple administrators, as well as legal counsel. To perform this process for the thousands of requests received each year would be enormously costly and would take money away from what our schools should be focused on: teaching our children.

Our associations have worked on another measure, L.D. 1719, that we believe is a better approach to this issue. This bill already has educator buy-in, and we believe it will make more meaningful changes to this process that will encourage more communication and transparency between school districts and parents – without the enormous expenses that we would likely see as a result of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration and I am happy to take any questions you might have.