

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 1760

AN ACT TO PROMOTE PUBLIC EDUCATION IN MAINE BY AMENDING
THE LAWS GOVERNING STUDENT TRANSFERS

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. 1760, An Act to Promote Public Education in Maine by Amending the Laws Governing Student Transfers.

This bill would remove important state guardrails, override local control and decision-making, add costs on to school districts, and harm the vitality and viability of Maine's small and rural schools.

Student Transfers: Removal of Local Control and Decision-Making

As our association has shared, the current student transfer process already requires substantial care and collaboration between school districts and families to balance student needs and educational stability. Through this thoughtful work, nearly 4,000 students in the last school year were approved for a transfer agreement from one district to another.

Superintendents must consider a host of factors when determining if a transfer request is in the best interest of a student. One great example was the testimony of Kittery Superintendent Eric Waddell on L.D. 607¹ from earlier this session – he outlined the seven factors he carefully weighs in a transfer agreement: educational needs, continuity, stability, custodial considerations, attendance, policy implications and district capacity. This is thoughtful work, done in partnership with families, and balances the needs of both students and the greater school community.

Similar to L.D. 607, this bill would remove the ability for a school to consider almost any of these factors. It would only consider whether the receiving school has “sufficient capacity for enrollment at the receiving school and grade level.” This would remove necessary guardrails on the student transfer process and could place huge financial pressures on districts across the state. Many schools could be forced to increase class sizes or add staff – increasing costs on local residents. Other schools – particularly those in smaller and rural areas – could see resources drained, threatening the vitality and viability of these important community institutions.

As we shared in our testimony on L.D. 607, Maine already has a failed history of attempting this sort of system. More than a decade ago, Maine's education commissioner openly encouraged families to appeal any

¹ <https://legislature.maine.gov/backend/app/services/getDocument.aspx?doctype=test&documentId=10041635>

denial of a student transfer request. The state then overturned nearly all of those denials. This effectively created a student transfer system with almost no guardrails, and it was met with immediate outcry from both Democrats and Republicans about a loss of local control and detrimental effects on school budgets. The legislature came together and unanimously passed legislation putting oversight over this process. L.D. 1760 would reintroduce many of these same issues that lawmakers forcefully rejected years ago, and we urge you to reject it.

Public Data on Student Transfers: More Costs on Schools

L.D. 1760 also proposes a similar disclosure requirement as L.D. 1588 – requiring SAUs to report yearly the “number of transfer applications, acceptances and denials and the reason for each denial,” with the commissioner publishing that data annually.

As we shared in our testimony on that bill, schools may already share much of this information, if requested. However, information about reasons for student transfers is deeply personal and frequently includes confidential information on medical history, family issues, bullying, and other emotional trauma. It is nearly impossible, in many cases, to “de-identify” this information, especially when referring to a situation in a small community or school district. Reviewing this data would require substantial review and analysis by both administrators and legal counsel, resulting in added costs to the school district. This money should be directed where it’s needed: towards classrooms and students.

For all of these reasons, our associations urge you to reject L.D. 1760. Thank you for your consideration – I am happy to take any questions you might have.