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Testimony of Representative Michael Brennan presenting

LD 1892, An Act to Establish Procedures for School Construction Projects

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Good morning, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and fellow distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Michael Brennan, and I represent House District 115, which includes a portion of Portland. Today, I am here to introduce **LD 1892, An Act to Establish Procedures for School Construction Projects**.

This year, the Maine Legislature has a unique opportunity to significantly revamp the school construction program and build the next generation of schools across Maine communities. I have introduced this legislation to overhaul the school construction program.

According to a January 2025 report published by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI), the state has a large number of school buildings and many were built in the 1950s and 1960s. The report goes on to point out that many of “these older buildings are not meeting the current safety requirements nor the educational support and service needs of students.” The report cites the comment of a focus group participant who said, “If you think about science labs being built in the [1960s], they don’t even closely meet what is needed now. As well as the special ed pieces, are just overwhelming. A building built in [1960s] certainly doesn’t have the capacity or the space to take care of those needs.”¹

Replacing buildings has been hampered by lack of funding and dramatically rising costs. Again, the MEPRI study showed that the “cost for school construction has risen substantially in the past three decades” – noting that the Brunswick High School project in 1992 had a cost of \$19 million, Hampden Academy cost \$54 million in 2008 and the Edward Little High School/Satellite Career and Technical Education Center cost \$120 million in 2019.

Specifically, LD 1892 establishes procedures for school construction projects, beginning July 1, 2026. The bill establishes a debt service fund that is funded by gaming activity revenue, cannabis tax revenue, lapsed balances in the General Fund, tobacco tax revenue and federal funds. If passed into law, school administrative units would be responsible for paying 25% of the total

¹ <https://hpb-us-v2.wp.mucdn.com/wpsites.maine.edu/dist/e/97/files/2025/01/MEPRI-Report-School-Construction-Policy-011425.pdf>

cost of a school construction project. The Commissioner of Education may adjust this percentage based on the school administrative unit's ability to pay.

The bill also requires all school construction projects to be green-certified and use the most cost-effective, energy-efficient and low emission standards possible. The bill also establishes the Maine Public School Financing Authority, which is responsible for the sale of bond issues for school administrative units and, when feasible, offers zero-interest financing or cash allotments for school construction projects.

This bill dramatically changes the funding resources for school construction, increases the number of possible projects and reduces reliance on local property taxes.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this legislation. I am happy to answer any questions.