



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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May 16, 2025

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

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 324, An Act to Increase Reading Proficiency in Public Schools, would direct the Maine Department of Education (DOE) to establish a grant program to support the implementation of best practices in reading and mathematics instruction in Maine's schools. The legislation also requires the inclusion of summer programming with a focus on helping students achieve grade-level proficiency.

The funds allocated in LD 324 would build upon successful foundations previously implemented. In the 131st Legislature, LD 1526 directed the DOE to award grants to school administrative units (SAUs) to support reading proficiency programming and appropriated \$200,000 in the FY24–25 biennium for that purpose. As part of ongoing efforts to build educator knowledge and workforce capacity in high-quality early literacy pedagogy grounded in science, these grants were designed to strengthen Pre-K through Grade 3 programming. Specifically, the funds supported Tier 1 (core) early literacy instruction using science-aligned and whole-child approaches. A report on the implementation of these grants was submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs on February 3, 2025.

LD 324 also builds on the success of the Department's \$10 million federal literacy grant program, funded through federal emergency relief dollars. This initiative served as a statewide catalyst for instructional improvement, reaching more than 64,000 students across Maine. Over 60% of eligible SAUs participated, using funds to adopt high-quality instructional materials and engage in professional learning aligned with the science of learning. Targeted supports reached students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and students experiencing homelessness or foster care.

Key outcomes and learnings from the \$10 million federal literacy grant program include:

- **Widespread uptake** of explicit and systematic phonics instruction in K–5 classrooms
- **Robust investment in professional learning**, including coaching, curriculum review, and training informed by learning science
- **Strategic use of screening tools** and data-based decision-making to guide instruction
- **Demonstrated momentum and readiness** for sustained instructional improvement—even under short timelines

In addition, the Department has strategically leveraged other federal and state funding streams—including the Preschool Development Grant and grants administered by the Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education (OSSIE)—to expand professional learning access in emergent and early reading instruction. Pre-K to Grade 3 educators statewide have engaged with resources such as the AIM modules, and the \$200,000 legislative grant supported implementation of these practices in over 40 schools.

Continued state-level investment through LD 324 will help sustain this progress and extend the Department’s support into mathematics instruction—where districts are equally eager to improve capacity. The proposed funding for summer learning is especially critical to address unfinished learning and support students in reaching grade-level proficiency in both literacy and math.

The Department is available to provide additional information and respond to questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Lambert". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beth Lambert

Chief Teaching and Learning Officer