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PUBLIC EDUCATION ADVOCATES

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 2012

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AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAWS GOVERNING CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. I am Robbie Feinberg, director of communications and government relations for Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the Legislative Committee of the Maine School Boards Association, in strong support of L.D. 2012.

As school board members, our number one responsibility is the health and the safety of all of the children in our communities, and we believe that Maine needs to do everything it can to protect our kids. Carbon monoxide poisoning is potentially deadly, and we've unfortunately seen examples in recent years of children who've been hospitalized because of exposure within their own schools and daycares.

According to one recent report, one of the most impactful steps we can take to ensure student safety is improving carbon monoxide detection in our schools. While Maine schools are already required to have one carbon monoxide detector, L.D. 2012 would ensure effective implementation across our state, with additional detection in places such as kitchens, portable classrooms and science labs. By requiring more detection in more areas, L.D. 2012 would better protect Maine children, school staff members, and ease anxiety from parents when they send their kids on the bus in the morning.

Our only reservation concerning this bill is the cost of implementation. A recent report estimates that if Maine wants to properly upgrade our school building infrastructure, it will cost our state **\$11 billion over the next 20 years**. Many districts are already struggling to keep up with their current school building needs, and we estimate that this bill could add additional expenses totaling thousands of dollars for some districts. Maine school board members are hearing -- loud and clear -- from their constituents that property taxes are already too high, and this bill could represent another unfunded mandate pushing up costs even further.

Our members ask that if your committee wants to advance this bill, it should add a funding mechanism, such as a state carbon monoxide safety grant program, in order to provide local districts with the funds for implementation. MSBA would be happy to work with your committee and other stakeholders in order to determine the statewide cost of L.D. 2012. Protecting our students' safety is vital, and we are eager to work with you to make our schools safer.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I'm happy to take any questions you might have.