



**MAINE MUNICIPAL
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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association (MMA)
In Support of Part C, Part T9-T11
and
Neither For Nor Against Part SSS

LD 2212, An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027

February 20, 2026

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Rebecca Lambert, and I am submitting testimony in support of Part C and Part T9-T11 and neither for nor against Part SSS on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) elected 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). MMA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit member service organization and aims to help provide policy solutions that work for all residents in Maine. The LPC guides the advocacy efforts and establishes positions on bills of municipal interest.

Part C. Municipal leaders are pleased that the supplemental budget continues to honor the commitment to fund 55% of the cost of K-12 education, as calculated by the EPS formula and supports the inclusion. This funding is essential to helping communities alleviate pressures on property taxpayers. Anyone who has served on a local budget committee knows that often funding for county and school services has the potential to reduce investments in municipal services to contain overall mil rate increases.

Part T9-T11. Students and parents alike rely on school buses to provide safe transportation to and from school. Local officials appreciate the \$6 million in funding in Part T9-T11 to retrofit school buses with crossing arms and anti-pinch sensors to enhance school bus safety. With the accidents that have occurred recently in our state, municipal officials appreciate the steps being taken to improve school bus safety. Rural or less resourced districts tend to keep their buses for longer periods, and this funding would allow those school districts to comply with safety requirements without placing additional pressure on school budgets and by extension, municipal budgets and property taxpayers.

There are some districts who contract with bus fleet services to meet their transportation needs. There is some concern that these buses would not be included in the proposal, leading to district owned buses having the newly required safety measures and those who contract these services left out of the mix. The LPC believes it would be helpful to include language that specifies these buses that are contracted by school districts are included.



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Part SSS. With respect to Part SSS, the LPC is neither for nor against this budget proposal. Local leaders deeply value educators and recognize their critical role in student success. They also recognize that competitive compensation is essential to recruiting and retaining high quality teachers.

However, any state action affecting teacher salary structures has a direct fiscal impact on local government at a time when municipalities are facing declining enrollment, increased valuations, and increasing school budgets, with some school budgets being rejected by voters. It is also important to acknowledge that teacher compensation is traditionally determined through the collective bargaining process at the local level. A statewide minimum salary framework intersects with that process and leans into an area that historically has been shaped by negotiation between school boards and educators. While municipal officials support teachers and a competitive wage, they also recognize the pressure that local budgets are under and the work it takes to negotiate collective bargaining agreements.

Thank you for your time and for considering our perspective on this important issue.