

**TESTIMONY OF  
PENDER MAKIN, COMMISSIONER  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs  
And the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Hearing Date: February 20, 2026, 10:00 am

**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”**

Senators Rotundo and Rafferty, Representatives Gattine and Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committees, my name is Pender Makin and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Education. I am here today to present testimony for those departmental items in the supplemental budget bill.

This is the final budget proposal from our Administration. The proposal delivers financial relief to Maine people, preserves programs that lawmakers and Maine people support, and addresses some emergent issues, including impacts of new federal legislation. Governor Mills’ guiding belief has always been that our strongest asset is the people of Maine and that’s why this budget seeks to support and invest in them. We look forward to working with the Legislature in the coming weeks to enact a balanced budget that supports Maine people and protects the fiscal health of our state.

In light of the tight budget environment, even as expenses and expectations increase, we are proposing to continue most of our operations within existing budgeted amounts. Those requests we are proposing here are focused on upholding the State’s commitment to covering 55% of the cost of education; supporting a free, appropriate, public education for pre-k students with disabilities – including expanded public school access and funding for the daily rate for special purpose private pre-k programs; and providing enhanced school bus safety.

The State’s collective bargaining unit agreements include negotiated language related to the classification and reclassification of positions. Reclasses may be employee (usually referred to as reclass) or management initiated (usually referred to as reorganization). Approved employee-initiated actions include a retroactive pay component back to the date the request was signed. Our department’s reclass and reorganization requests are summarized at the end of this testimony as Appendix A. While I won’t read the specifics, we have included the blippie and justification in this testimony on the relevant page in italics for your reference.

Our proposal also includes allotment adjustments as a result of the State’s independent Revenue Forecasting Committee (RFC). Our department’s RFC adjustments are summarized at the end of this testimony as Appendix B. While I won’t read the specifics, we have included the blippie and justification in this testimony on the relevant page in italics for your reference.

Our proposal includes the addition of 5 positions, two of which are self-funded and replace contracted staff. These 5 positions are necessary to maintain current services, address transportation safety, and support the School Facilities team. I will describe the need and impact of each request throughout my testimony.

Our proposal also includes language requesting the move of some Personal Services to All Other. This is language that will allow agencies to self-fund a small number of emergent operating expenses through this biennial. Throughout the dozen agencies with this language, the total amount is \$6.7 million in FY26 and \$5.3 million in FY27. For Department of Education expenses, you can find this Language in Part QQ, and it amounts to \$214,129 for FY 26 and \$235,485 for FY27. I will be testifying in detail about what our agency's needs are related to this language.

Now to the details. For new initiatives, other than those I've already touched on, I will be providing a description of the need and impact. You will also see the blippie and justification from the budget document in italics. I won't be reading that part but it's there for your reference.

### **CLIMATE EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PILOT PROGRAM FUND**

This program was established to provide grants for professional development for educators on climate science and to support the preparation of courses on interdisciplinary climate education. The program supports one limited-period State Education Representative position to administer the program.

On page **A-28**, there is **one initiative** in this program. This initiative also impacts the Office of Innovation program and will be discussed in detail later in this testimony. The General Fund portion of this initiative may be found on page **A-33**.

*Continues one State Education Representative position, previously established by Resolve 2021, chapter 178, through June 19, 2027 and provides funding for related All Other costs. This initiative also transfers the position from the Climate Education Professional Development Pilot Program Fund program, Other Special Revenue Funds to the Office of Innovation program, General Fund and reduces All Other allocation in the Climate Education Professional Development Pilot Program Fund program, Other Special Revenue Funds.*

*Public Law 2021, chapter 178 provided funding to support a climate education grant program, including a limited-period position to develop and execute the grant program, as well as design environmental literacy resources and training that align with all content areas in pre-k through grade 12 public education. This initiative continues the position to continue supporting interdisciplinary climate education and help prepare students to enter careers that support sustainability and climate resilience.*

### **EDUCATION IN THE UNORGANIZED TERRITORY**

The purpose of the Education in the Unorganized Territory (EUT) program is to provide educational programming and related support services to school-age children whose parents reside in the unorganized territory of the State. Funds expended from the General Fund budget for EUT educational services are fully reimbursed each fiscal year by local tax revenues raised in the unorganized territory through the Municipal Cost Component Act.

The program has **six initiatives** that may be found on pages **A-29** and **A-30**.

The **first** initiative provides funding to establish an allocation to properly record EUT's child nutrition revenue and expenditures within the state's accounting system. This change will provide better transparency in the receipt and use of funds.

*Provides funding to establish an allocation to properly record child nutrition expenditures.*

*Education in the Unorganized Territory (EUT) receives funding from the Department of Education's Child Nutrition program. The Child Nutrition team oversees several United States Department of Agriculture food and nutrition services programs and initiatives that provide healthy and nutritious food to children attending schools in the state, including students in the EUT. This initiative will allow the EUT to properly record revenue and expenses for child nutrition services.*

The **second** initiative provides funding to purchase or significantly repair one new school bus annually to ensure that no bus in the EUT fleet exceeds 20 years of service or is retired from service prematurely.

*Provides funding for the annual purchase of one school bus to maintain an updated fleet of school buses.*

*Education in the Unorganized Territory (EUT) has a fleet of 19 school buses that are used to transport students in the Unorganized Territory (UT). The EUT is not eligible to participate in the Maine School Bus Purchase Program, therefore funding for new bus purchases and maintenance is fully funded by UT taxpayers. This initiative provides capital funding to purchase one new school bus annually or to fund significant repair necessary to ensure that no bus in the EUT fleet exceeds 20 years of service or is retired from service prematurely.*

The **third** initiative transfers a Teacher Aide position from the Federal Expenditures Fund to the General Fund and reorganizes the position to an Education Technician II position. This initiative aligns the position funding and classification with all other EUT positions recently reclassified from the Teacher Aide to Education Technician II classifications. This position is included in Appendix A.

*Transfers one seasonal part-time Teacher Aide position from the Federal Expenditures Fund to the General Fund within the same program and reorganizes the position to a seasonal part-time Education Technician II position. This initiative also provides All Other funding in the Federal Expenditures Fund to maintain the allocation.*

*This position provides student education services in state operated schools located in the Unorganized Territory. It is the responsibility of Education in the Unorganized Territory (EUT) to provide free appropriate public education to all students of the Unorganized Territory. This position is part of a team of educators working in the EUT special education program to provide a range of assistance to children with disabilities.*

The **fourth** initiative transfers and reallocates two Teacher positions previously funded as a whole or in part by the Federal Expenditures Fund to the General Fund to align the position funding with actual time and effort expenditures.

*Transfers one Teacher BS position from the Federal Expenditures Fund to the General Fund within the same program and transfers and reallocates the cost of one Teacher MS position from 50% General Fund and 50% Federal Expenditures Fund to 100 % General Fund within the same program. This initiative also provides All Other funding in the Federal Expenditures Fund to maintain the allocation.*

*These positions provide student education services in state operated schools located in the Unorganized Territory. It is the responsibility of Education in the Unorganized Territory (EUT) to provide free appropriate public education to all students of the Unorganized Territory. These positions are part of a team of educators working in the EUT special education program to provide a range of assistance to children with disabilities.*

The **fifth** initiative provides one-time funding to complete renovations at a house located on the Kingman Elementary School property to be used as staff housing to aid in the recruitment of qualified school staff.

*Provides one-time funding to update mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems and complete minor renovations at a state-owned building in the unorganized territory.*

*Kingman Elementary School has a house on its property, historically used to house regular and itinerant staff. The house has been unoccupied for several years and now requires upgrades to make it habitable. The current teacher shortage, coupled with the school's remote location and the lack of other housing, makes school-provided housing attractive to candidates seeking to work at the school. The school currently has an employee who will require housing. The house renovation involves mold remediation and upgrades to its water, heating, and sewer systems. The completion of the renovation work provides opportunities for the long-term sustainability of the school in Kingman Township.*

The **sixth** initiative provides one-time funding in FY26 to update outdoor play areas at three EUT schools to meet current safety standards. Additional safety standards apply in the current school year with the inclusion of pre-kindergarten students in all three schools.

*Provides one-time funding to update outdoor play areas in 3 state-owned schools in the Unorganized Territory.*

*An assessment of outdoor play areas at 3 state-owned schools in the Unorganized Territory identified deficiencies in meeting current safety standards as outlined by the Department of Education. Additional safety standards apply in school year 2025-26 with the inclusion of pre-kindergarten students in all three schools. This initiative provides one-time funding to update outdoor play areas to meet current safety standards.*

## **FEDERAL PROGRAMS TEAM**

The Federal Programs Team program is responsible for implementation of federal programs and grants, including Assessment and Accountability, Child Nutrition, and Elementary & Secondary Education. The Office coordinates and oversees services related to the efficient utilization of federal funds to support instructional programs and activities in schools across our state. The Office also collects, summarizes, and analyzes student data for performance, public reports, and policy direction while providing technical assistance and professional learning opportunities for school leaders and educators.

The program has **three initiatives** that may be found on page **A-30**.

The **first** initiative continues a State Education Representative position to support grant activities for a one-year preschool development grant awarded in December 2025. This initiative provides funding for grant activities and continues the position for a six-month period after the end of the grant to allow for grant close-out activities.

*Continues one limited-period State Education Representative position previously continued by Public Law 2025, chapter 388 through June 30, 2027 and provides funding for related All Other costs and grant activities.*

*The Department of Education received a one-year preschool development grant in December 2025. The grant objective is to ensure children and their families will receive the services they need through an efficient, data-driven and evidenced-based system so that all children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. This initiative provides funding for grant activities and continues the position for a six month period after the end of the grant to allow for grant close-out activities.*

The **second** initiative reduces funding for the annual cost of a contract between the Maine Legislative Council and the Maine Education Policy Research Institute and shifts funding from the department directly to the University of Maine System. This change will reduce both the administrative burden and cost of managing a contract and will prevent disruption of the work due to contract delays.

*Reduces funding for an annual contract with the Maine Education Policy Research Institute.*

*This initiative reduces funding for the annual cost of a contract between the Maine Legislative Council and the Maine Education Policy Research Institute to perform targeted*

*research as directed by the chairs of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. Funding for this work will shift from the department to the University of Maine System.*

The **third** initiative transfers a position and related All Other funding from the Federal Expenditures Fund to Other Special Revenue Funds. The position is funded through a federal contract and supports work related to national and international assessments. This initiative allows revenues and expenditures to be assigned to the appropriate fund.

*Transfers one Education Specialist III position, related All Other costs and program administration costs from the Federal Expenditures Fund to Other Special Revenue Funds within the same program.*

*This position serves as the liaison between the department and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) which administers the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other student assessments. This position is also responsible for analyzing and reporting the data of each assessment and its comparative relationship to NAEP and the respective state assessment. Participation in NAEP is mandatory in order for school administrative units to receive Title I funds.*

#### **FUND FOR THE EFFICIENT DELIVERY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

This program was established to provide competitive grants to SAUs to fund the cost of regionalization efforts. The program has ended and the unexpended balance has been returned to the unappropriated surplus of the General Fund.

On page **A-31**, there is one initiative in this program that reduces allocation as this program has ended and funding is no longer available. This initiative is supported by **Language Part HH on page 58** of the language document that repeals the entirety of chapter 114-A related to the creation, uses and sources of funding of the program and by **Language Part NN on page 61** of the language document that repeals the subsection of the authorization of payment of targeted education funds related to FEDES.

*Reduces funding to align allocations with projected resources as funding is no longer available.*

*Allocation is no longer needed as this program has ended.*

#### **GENERAL PURPOSE AID FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS (GPA)**

This program provides state funding to support local schools through the Essential Programs and Services (EPS) formula and through targeted education funds. The program relies on a variety of data systems and property valuation information provided through Maine Revenue Services to calculate the total cost of public education in Maine and the percent share for which each municipality will be responsible.

The program has **four initiatives** that may be found on page **A-31**.

The **first** initiative continues and makes permanent one Data Quality Trainer position that supports school administrative units in student and staff level data collection and helps to facilitate timely, accurate and complete data. The position was previously filled by contracted staff, and the permanent position will be self-funded with a transfer from All Other to Personal Services.

*Continues and makes permanent one limited-period Education Specialist II position previously established by Financial Order 004467 F6 and reduces All Other to fund the position.*

*This position serves as a Data Quality Trainer (DQT) to develop and implement professional development training and materials for school administrative units regarding student and staff level data collections. The DQT supports data collection and reporting systems in order to meet state and federal reporting requirements and to facilitate the collection of timely, accurate and complete data. This statewide data impacts funding, helps identify areas where increased support may be needed and informs policy decisions.*

The **second** initiative provides funding to maintain the statutory requirement of funding the state share of the total cost of public education at 55%. This initiative is supported by **Language Part C on pages 1-7** of the language document that establishes the total cost of education, the annual state share percentage, and the state and local contributions.

*Provides funding to maintain the statutory requirement of funding the state share of the total cost of funding public education from kindergarten to grade 12 at 55%.*

*Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 15671, subsection 1 requires funding the state share percentage of the total cost of funding public education from kindergarten to grade 12 at 55%. This amount represents the increased cost from fiscal year 2025-26 to maintain funding the state share percentage at 55%.*

The **third** initiative reduces allocation based on revenue projections from the Revenue Forecasting Committee's December 2025 report and is included in Appendix B.

*Reduces funding to align allocations with projected expenditures and available resources.*

The **fourth** initiative continues and makes permanent an Agency Procurement and Program Administrator that provides support with complex procurement work including contract development and Requests for Proposals. The position was previously filled by contracted staff, and the permanent position will be self-funded with a transfer from All Other to Personal Services.

*Continues and makes permanent one limited-period Agency Procurement and Program Administrator position previously established by Financial Order 004466 F6 and reduces All Other to fund the position.*

*This position supports complex technology procurement work. This position provides procurement support to department staff requesting technology services and goods and*

*works and consults with Maine IT, the department's Data Team and Procurement Team to ensure policy adherence and streamlined flow for document approval. The position participates on and leads Request for Proposal (RFP) writing teams and RFP evaluation teams and writes contracts and other procurement documents.*

## **INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING**

This program leads statewide efforts to strengthen teaching and learning across Maine's public education system, from early childhood through grade 12. The Office of Innovative Teaching and Learning (OTL) supports high-quality, evidence-based instruction that prepares all learners for meaningful lives, active citizenship, and future success. OTL advances Maine's educational vision through coordinated initiatives in literacy, numeracy, interdisciplinary instruction, learning through technology, early learning, multilingual learner support, and multi-tiered systems of support. OTL also oversees and supports implementation of the Maine Learning Results, ensuring that all students have access to rigorous, relevant learning aligned to statewide standards and expectations.

The program has **two initiatives** that can be found on page **A-32**.

The **first** initiative continues and makes permanent one State Education Representative that supports the statutorily required teaching of Maine Wabanaki Studies. The position works with Wabanaki Tribal Nations to develop materials that support effective implementation of Wabanaki Studies in the classroom and the position provides professional development and technical support to educators in the field.

*Continues and makes permanent one limited-period State Education Representative position previously continued by Financial Order 004383 F6 and provides funding for related All Other costs.*

*State educators require targeted support to be able to implement Wabanaki Studies in their classrooms and the development of materials must be done in conjunction with Wabanaki Tribal Nations. This position ensures the effective implementation of Wabanaki Studies in Maine classrooms and the relationship management necessary to ensure quality materials are developed with and supported by Wabanaki Tribal Nations. The position was previously funded by financial order in the Learning Through Technology program, General Fund.*

The **second** initiative provides one-time funding to expand the department's Artificial Intelligence Guidance Toolkit and to provide grants to school administrative units, non-profits, universities, or professional organizations which provide professional development or planning to educators related to artificial intelligence, as part of the Governor's AI Commission recommendations.

*As part of the Governor's AI Commission recommendations, provides one-time funding to expand the Department of Education's Artificial Intelligence Guidance Toolkit and to provide grants to school administrative units, non-profits, universities, or professional*

*organizations which provide professional development or planning to educators related to artificial intelligence.*

*Provides one-time funding to expand the Department of Education's Artificial Intelligence Guidance Toolkit and to provide grants to school administrative units, non-profits, universities, or professional organizations which provide professional development or planning to educators related to artificial intelligence.*

## **LEARNING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY**

This program provides the tools and resources to assist Maine's teachers in integrating technology into their classrooms and curriculum. Programs include the Maine Learning Technology Initiative and the Maine Online Opportunities for Sustained Education (MOOSE) project, which created asynchronous project-based online learning modules for use by students, teachers, and families.

On **Page A-32**, there is **one initiative** in this program. This initiative provides one-time funding for the costs associated with prohibiting the use of personal electronic devices during the school day. This initiative is supported by **Language Part GG on page 58** that directs the department, in coordination with the Maine School Management Association, to develop a model policy available to school boards prohibiting the use of personal electronic devices during the school day.

*Provides one-time funding for school administrative units to support costs associated with prohibiting the use of personal electronic devices during the school day.*

*This initiative provides funding to reimburse school administrative units for the costs associated with a cell phone ban.*

## **MAINE SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER**

The Maine School Safety Center assists schools in ensuring the overall safety of their school communities. The primary role of the center is to provide training, guidance, and technical support to Maine schools regarding their efforts to safely mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from hazards and threats.

The program has **one initiative** that may be found on page **A-32**. This initiative establishes a Public Service Coordinator I position to strengthen student transportation safety statewide. This position will coordinate standardized safety training for school bus drivers and transportation directors, provide bus safety education for school staff, families, and students, and collaborate with the Transportation Coordinator to develop statewide training standards.

*Establishes one Public Service Coordinator I position and provides funding for related All Other costs.*

*This position is established to strengthen pupil transportation safety statewide. In response to recent school bus accidents, this role would coordinate standardized safety training for school bus drivers, provide bus safety education for school staff, families, and students,*

*and collaborate with the Transportation Coordinator to develop statewide training standards. The position would also establish an ongoing certification program beyond initial licensing, including minimum annual training requirements, to reinforce best practices and reduce preventable risks while broader recommendations are under development.*

As detailed by the DAFS Commissioner, the supplemental budget proposes one-time language to change the use of the state's record high Budget Stabilization Fund in order to fund certain affordability and emergency initiatives. That proposal can be found in Part T beginning on Page 40 of the language document, transferring a total of \$324.7 million.

The Department of Education's portion of Part T includes transportation safety language in **Language Parts T-9, T-10 and T-11 on pages 43 and 44** of the language document. **Part T-9** establishes an Other Special Revenue Fund within the Maine School Safety Center that is funded in **Part T-10** with a transfer from the Budget Stabilization Fund. **Part T-11** provides a one-time allocation for safety measures including retrofitting Maine school buses with crossing arms and anti-pinch door sensors. The funding will cover the nearly 1,700 eligible buses that are owned by Maine school administrative units that are not currently equipped with these technologies.

#### **OFFICE OF INNOVATION**

This program is comprised of three primary work teams: Innovative Research and Design, Climate Response and Outdoor Education (including Green Schools), and Strategic Partnerships. Teams work collaboratively with external organizations, agencies, and other internal teams to ensure comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated services to support all Maine students. The teams rely on stakeholder input from several advisory committees and task forces to support the whole student and the current needs of the education field in Maine.

This program has **one initiative** that may be found on page **A-33**. This initiative continues a State Education Representative position for one additional year in the General Fund to maintain support of interdisciplinary climate education and to help prepare students to enter careers that support sustainability and climate resilience. The Other Special Revenue portion of this initiative may be found on page **A-28**.

*Continues one State Education Representative position, previously established by Resolve 2021, chapter 178, through June 19, 2027 and provides funding for related All Other costs. This initiative also transfers the position from the Climate Education Professional Development Pilot Program Fund program, Other Special Revenue Funds to the Office of Innovation program, General Fund and reduces All Other allocation in the Climate Education Professional Development Pilot Program Fund program, Other Special Revenue Funds.*

*Public Law 2021, chapter 178 provided funding to support a climate education grant program, including a limited-period position to develop and execute the grant program, as well as design environmental literacy resources and training that align with all content areas in pre-k through grade 12 public education. This initiative continues the position to*

*continue supporting interdisciplinary climate education and help prepare students to enter careers that support sustainability and climate resilience.*

## **OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE PATHWAYS (WDIP)**

This program provides comprehensive coordination and alignment of policies, programs, resources, and initiatives of Adult Education, Career and Technical Education, Extended Learning Opportunities, and Education Pathways & Early College to expand learning opportunities for students, maximize efficiencies, and elevate WDIP's collective support for Maine's workforce goals.

This program has **two initiatives** that may be found on page A-33.

The **first** initiative provides funding for Maine Career Pathways, which is a collaboration among multiple state agencies and higher education institutions formed to provide career opportunities for secondary students and adult learners. Career pathways programming directly connects student learning to industry-needed skills by providing an intentional plan for high-value and in-demand jobs. These pathways provide students with opportunities to complete certifications and credentials to meet the workforce needs of employers and their local and regional economies.

*Provides funding for Maine Career Pathways to provide participants with opportunities to complete certifications and credentials to meet the workforce needs of employers and their local and regional economies.*

*Maine Career Pathways is a collaboration of multiple state agencies, higher education institutions, and nonprofits seeking to provide career opportunities for secondary students and adult learners. Career pathways programming offers education and training to meet the needs of the local job market by providing an intentional plan for high-value and in-demand occupations. The proposed pathways include healthcare, early childhood education, energy and infrastructure, and advanced manufacturing, which are cited in the Maine economic development strategy. These pathways are created through collaborations and partnerships with: high schools, career and technical education schools, adult education programs, postsecondary institutions, and industry representatives. These pathways intend to provide participants with opportunities to complete certifications and credentials to meet the workforce needs of employers and their local and regional economies. This initiative relates to LAB F-A-7125.*

The **second** initiative adjusts funding for debt service costs for career and technical education centers and regions and provides one-time funding for the overhead costs of two positions that oversee these funds.

*Adjusts funding for debt service costs associated with the bonding authority granted in Public Law 2021, chapter 635, Part X for career and technical education centers and regions. This initiative also provides one-time funding for the overhead costs of 2 limited-period positions supporting career and technical education bonds.*

*Public Law 2021, chapter 635, Part X authorized the issuance of securities for equipment purchases to career and technical education centers and career and technical education regions. Pursuant to section 6 of this Part, debt service costs for bonds issued to career and technical education centers and regions must be paid by the State. This initiative adjusts funding for the debt service costs of these bonds. This initiative provides funding for the overhead costs of two positions continued through June 30, 2027 that direct, coordinate and oversee program funds.*

### **SCHOOL AND STUDENT SUPPORTS (O3S)**

This program strives to ensure that Maine schools are inclusive, healthy, safe, and supportive communities where every student thrives. This program provides resources and technical assistance that supports school personnel, including school nurses, social workers, school counselors, McKinney-Vento liaisons, and alternative educators. O3S coordinates resources and programs that promote safe, healthy school communities for all.

This program has **one initiative** that may be found on page A-33. This initiative provides funding for an approved reclassification and is included in Appendix A.

*Provides funding for the approved reclassification of one Public Service Manager II position from range 30 to range 32 retroactive to December 29, 2023.*

*The Coordinated School Health Team has seen substantial growth with the wide breadth of work being done to promote the continuity and quality of health services and programs addressing the broad health needs of children in Maine. This position's supervision has increased from overseeing a team of three to managing a team of eight direct reports consisting of consultants, School Nurse Specialists, and School Nurse Regional Liaisons. The position's fiscal responsibility has expanded to approximately \$1.4 million, encompassing increased personnel management costs and the overall operating budget for the Coordinated School Health Program. The position has also seen a significant increase in the level of legislation that has been introduced, which demands enhanced problem-solving abilities to allow for proactive steps in influencing the legislative process and to provide the department's position and information related to submitted legislation.*

### **SCHOOL FACILITIES**

This program provides operational leadership, strategic planning, coordination, and administration of programs related to public school buildings. It oversees and administers the Major Capital School Construction Program, the School Revolving Renovation Fund, the Leased Space Program, and Facilities Inventory. The Office works closely with the State Board of Education, state agencies, and school administrative units to accomplish its goals.

On page A-34 there is **one initiative** for this program that establishes an Architect Engineer position to coordinate projects and contracted personnel to ensure consistency and successful project completion.

*Establishes one Public Service Coordinator II position and provides funding for related All Other costs.*

*This position will serve as an Architect Engineer and is essential to completing School Construction team objectives effectively and efficiently with a high level of responsibility and oversight. This position coordinates projects and contracted personnel to ensure consistency and successful project completion. The work requires the employee to independently research assigned projects, resolve issues and develop recommendations to ensure equity and timely delivery of state funded school construction projects. The scope, complexity and responsibilities of the position include increased energy efficiency standards and building codes, state carbon reduction goals for new construction or renovation, and the impact of the Whole Student Framework on public school design.*

### **SPECIAL SERVICES TEAM**

This program provides leadership, technical assistance, coordination, and supervision of programs and services provided in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to children with disabilities birth to 22 years old.

On page **A-34** there is **one initiative** in this program that provides funding for an approved reclassification and related costs. The position is included in Appendix A.

*Provides funding for the approved reclassification of one Education Specialist III position to a State Education Representative position retroactive to September 19, 2024 and provides funding for related All Other costs.*

*This position helps students with disabilities meet their individualized education plans and navigate life after high school, achieve post-secondary education, career opportunities or other goals. Activities include employment, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing adult education, independent living, and/or community participation. This position's scope of work has broadened, evolving into strategic leadership and acting as a liaison by building and securing stakeholders and partnerships across the state to support this work.*

## LANGUAGE PARTS

**Language Part C on pages 1-7** of the language document was previously discussed in the General Purpose Aid for Local Schools program.

**Language Parts T-9, T-10 and T-11 on pages 43 and 44** of the language document were previously discussed in the Maine School Safety Center program.

**Language Part FF on page 58** of the language document authorizes the receipt and expenditure of private funds to support educational programs.

**Language Part GG on page 58** of the language document was previously discussed in the Learning Through Technology program.

**Language Part HH on page 58** of the language document was previously discussed in the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services program.

**Language Part II on page 59** of the language document increases the age requirements for enrollment from: a person who has not yet reached 20 years of age before the start of a school year to a person who has not yet reached 22 years of age before the start of the school year. This change aligns statutory language to Rule Chapter 101, Maine Unified Special Education Regulation (MUSER), that governs the provision of special education services in Maine.

**Language Part JJ on pages 59-60** of the language document updates statutory uses of the Preschool Special Education Program Fund and clarifies that a school administrative unit's (SAU's) unexpended funds in the program shall be carried forward for the same purpose. Public Law 2023, Chapter 643, Part W required SAUs to provide early childhood special education services to preschool aged children with disabilities. This transition began during the 2024-25 school year and will be complete by July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2028. The Preschool Special Education Fund was established in that same bill to provide funding for the change. Funds are distributed to SAUs through a quarterly allocation. This language Part also updates allowable uses of the fund to include costs attributed to professional and administrative staff support to implement statutory requirements of the fund.

**Language Part KK on page 60** of the language document changes the way certain adult education funds are distributed by moving adult education funding from the Essential Programs and Services (EPS) funding calculation to state funding. This change will improve accuracy, simplify reporting, provide better equity, and increase the impact of funding intended for those students, aged 16-20, who are no longer enrolled in pre-k-12 education.

**Language Part LL on page 61** of the language document adds an alternate data set to determine teacher eligibility for National Board Salary Supplement payments. Current statute partly determines eligibility based on the number of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch in the school where a teacher works. This language adds the number of students identified as economically disadvantaged for subsidy purposes as an alternate determination of eligibility.

**Language Part MM on page 61** of the language document changes how principal and interest costs for approved major capital projects are funded. This Part moves debt service costs from payment within the EPS funding calculation to payment as targeted education funds. The change will attribute debt service costs only to those SAUs with approved major capital projects.

**Language Part NN on pages 61-62** of the language document was previously discussed in the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services program.

**Language Part OO on page 62** of the language document changes the Special Services Team program General Fund account to a nonlapsing account. This account primarily funds one-time preschool special education classroom startup costs related to SAU provision of early childhood special education services to preschool aged children with disabilities.

**Language Part PP-1 on page 62** of the language document transfers \$12,600,000 in FY26 of unencumbered balance forward in the General Purpose Aid for Local Schools program to the Child Development Services program to support payments of a daily tuition rate to special purpose private preschools.

**Language Part PP-2 on page 62** of the language document transfers \$4,051,457 in FY26 of the unencumbered balance forward in the General Purpose Aid for Local Schools program to the Child Development Services program to maintain current operations.

**Language Part QQ-1 on page 63** of the language document authorizes the department to transfer up to \$37,000 in unexpended FY26 Personal Services balances to All Other in the School Finance and Operations program for the purpose of funding licensing and maintenance costs for an internet-based application for free and reduced-price meals.

**Language Part QQ-2 on page 63** of the language document authorizes the department to transfer up to \$177,129 in FY26 and up to \$185,985 in FY27 in unexpended Personal Services balances to All Other in the Leadership Team program for the purpose of funding annual hosting and maintenance costs for the department's grant management system.

**Language Part QQ-3 on page 63** of the language document authorizes the department to transfer up to \$12,500 in unexpended FY27 Personal Services balances to All Other in the Adult Education program for the purpose of funding increased hosting, maintenance and connectivity costs related to the MaineSTARS adult education data reporting system.

**Language Part SSS on pages 110-111** of the language document annually increases minimum teacher salaries beginning in the 2027-2028 school year until the minimum teacher salary for certified teachers and career and technical education teachers reaches \$50,000.

The following language will be included in the upcoming supplemental budget change package to clarify the intended ramp up toward \$50,000:

**Sec. 4. 20-A MRSA §15689, sub-§7-A, as amended by PL 2021, c. 441, §2, is further amended to read:**

7-A. Adjustment for minimum teacher salary. Beginning in fiscal year 2027-28, the commissioner shall, in accordance with this subsection, increase the state share of the total allocation to a qualifying school administrative unit by an amount necessary to achieve the minimum salary for certified teachers and career and technical education teachers established in section ~~13407~~ 13408.

A. As used in this subsection, unless the context otherwise indicates, "qualifying school administrative unit" means a school administrative unit that the commissioner determines to have a locally established salary schedule with a minimum teacher salary less than \$45,000 in school year 2027-2028. As used in this subsection, unless the context otherwise indicates, "incremental salary increases" means the incremental increases in the salaries of certified teachers and career and technical education teachers employed by a qualifying school administrative unit in school year 2027-2028 necessary to meet the minimum salary requirements of section 13408 from fiscal year 2027-28 to fiscal year 2029-30.

B. The commissioner shall allocate the funds appropriated by the Legislature in accordance with the following.

(1) The amount of increased funds provided to qualifying school administrative units under this subsection must be the amount necessary to fund the incremental salary increases specified in this subsection.

(2) The number of certified teachers and career and technical education teachers eligible for incremental salary increases in a qualifying school administrative unit for a fiscal year must be based on the information supplied to the department pursuant to section ~~13407~~ 13408 in that fiscal year.

(3) The increased funds provided under this subsection must be issued to qualifying school administrative units as an adjustment to the state school subsidy for distribution to the certified teachers and career and technical education teachers. Qualifying school administrative units shall use the payments provided under this subsection to provide salary adjustments to those certified teachers and career and technical education teachers eligible for incremental salary increases. The department shall collect the necessary data to allow the funds to be included in a qualifying school administrative unit's monthly subsidy payments beginning no later than February 1st of each fiscal year.

(4) Funding for incremental salary increases in fiscal year ~~2020-21~~ 2027-28 must be based on data submitted to the department and certified by school administrative units as of October 1, ~~2019~~ 2026.

It has been my honor to present this testimony and we appreciate your time today. My team and I are prepared to address any questions that you may have.

## APPENDIX A: Reclasses/Reorgs/Range Changes

Civil Service Rules require the State's Human Resources Officer to maintain the classification plan and establish the processes and procedures with which to do so. There is a long-standing process in place to evaluate proper classification of positions and determine through a functional job analysis whether a position meets the requirements for reclassification, including any pay adjustment. The State's collective bargaining unit agreements include negotiated language related to this process. Actions may include changing classification or keeping the same classification, but changing pay range (usually referenced in blippie as range change). Requests may be employee initiated (usually referred to as reclass) or management initiated (usually referred to as reorganization). Approved employee-initiated actions include a retroactive pay component back to the date the request was signed. Reclass/reorg/range change initiatives in Part A of the budget are necessary to fund these approved actions, which is required before the action can be processed and paid. Reclass initiatives in Part B are self-funded.

Page	Program	Fund	FY26 Amount	FY27 Amount
A-29	0220	GF	\$0	\$42,145
A-33	Z270	GF	\$30,883	\$17,816
A-34	Z080	FF	\$13,992	\$9,102

## APPENDIX B: Allocation Adjustments

Adjusts funding to align with revenue projections from the December 1, 2025 Revenue Forecast Committee forecast.

Page	Program	Fund	FY26 Amount	FY27 Amount
A-31	0308	OSR	(\$1,200,982)	(\$2,011,360)