

Testimony in support of LD 2226: An Act to Amend the Essential Programs and Services School Funding Formula

Provided by Cari Medd, Superintendent of MSAD 52 (Greene, Leeds and Turner)

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Cari Medd and I am the Superintendent of schools for MSAD 52 serving the towns of Greene, Leeds and Turner in Androscoggin County. I am here to offer my qualified support for LD 2226.

The Essential Programs and Services funding formula is out of date in a number of significant ways. This bill seeks to address some of those flaws. And while I don't yet have a full understanding of how these proposed changes could impact my district, this legislation is a move in the right direction. I'd like to offer the experiences of my district to illustrate how this should be considered just step one in updating the formula.

MSAD 52 works hard to do all of the right things to offer an adequate education to its students. We limit adding programs and sometimes eliminate programming when budgets are too high; we eliminate positions to minimize increases to our towns; we maintain slightly higher class sizes than we want; and we put money into maintaining our buildings to avoid health and safety crises. Despite our fiscal frugality, and as one of the few districts in Maine that is growing in its student count, we continue to struggle to reign in the additional local amount we must ask from our towns. This is 100% due to the fact that our expenses far out pace what the EPS formula provides. Transportation costs, building maintenance projects, student needs and personnel costs continue to exceed what is provided by the state.

Last year's ED 279 provided the district with \$1.3 million more dollars in state subsidy, all of which went to staff salaries and health insurance. This left the district with few options but to pass on the additional costs of a special education budget that grew by over \$1.1 million dollars and a maintenance budget that grew by over \$650,000. Despite eliminating over 20 positions, the additional local share grew by 14%.

Stories like this are why we have seen a steady increase in the additional local share in my district since 2019. The required local share has grown an average of only 1.3% in that time. The state share has grown an average of 4.84%. But the additional local share has outpaced both of those revenue sources by an average of 7.56%.

The inequities in education across our great state are breathtaking. I am not exaggerating when I say that my jaw drops when I hear what some students in our state have access to in their public schools compared to where I live and work.

LD 2226 is a good start. I urge you to continue to repair and update the EPS formula to help school districts provide an adequate education to our students.