



Falmouth Public Schools
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Dear Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding LD 2226, *An Act to Amend the Essential Programs and Services School Funding Formula*. I appreciate the Committee's continued attention to the critical issue of equitable school funding across Maine.

First, I want to acknowledge the importance of ensuring that every student in Maine has access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed. A fair and equitable funding system is essential to that goal. I also want to express appreciation for the work of the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) in helping to analyze and inform improvements to the Essential Programs and Services (EPS) formula.

While I support the goal of improving funding equity, I am concerned about the disproportionate impact that the proposed changes could have on certain communities, including those in Cumberland County. Based on the currently available projections, the Town of Falmouth is expected to experience a reduction in state aid exceeding \$1 million. For a district our size, a loss of that magnitude would require difficult choices that would directly affect students and taxpayers.

A reduction in this level of funding could result in cuts to student programming, such as reduced course offerings, fewer extracurricular opportunities, and limitations on academic and student support services. Alternatively, maintaining these programs would require significant increases in the local tax burden. Either path places our schools and community in a challenging position, forcing reductions in educational opportunities or increasing financial pressure on local taxpayers, and neither outcome is beneficial for our students, families, our schools, or our community.

Given the significance of these impacts, I respectfully suggest that the Legislature take additional time to fully evaluate the impacts before implementing major structural changes to the EPS formula. My understanding is that MEPRI has been able to model only two of the nine components under consideration. Moving forward with incomplete modeling risks unintended consequences across the state.

A prudent next step would be to slow the process until all components of the proposed changes can be fully modeled and evaluated. This would allow policymakers, school districts, and communities to better understand the full impact before making permanent adjustments to the funding formula.

Additionally, I encourage the Committee to consider a “hold harmless” provision for districts that would otherwise experience significant reductions in aid, which is estimated to cost approximately \$5 million. Such a provision could ensure that districts do not receive less than their FY27 funding levels until the revised formula results in state funding that exceeds those amounts. This would provide stability for school systems while allowing time for thoughtful implementation of any long-term improvements to the formula.

In closing, I strongly support the goal of strengthening Maine's public education system and ensuring that all schools receive the resources they need. However, progress should not come at the expense of other communities that are also working hard to support their students. Ideally, changes to the funding formula should reflect the principle that a rising tide lifts all boats, ensuring that improvements in equity help elevate opportunities for students across the entire state.

Thank you for your time and for your continued work on behalf of Maine's students and schools.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Nolan
Superintendent of Schools
Falmouth, Maine