

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF

L.D. 2226

AN ACT TO AMEND THE ESSENTIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FUNDING  
FORMULA

March 9, 2026

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is **Trevor Doiron** and I live in Jay, which is part of RSU 73 along with Livermore and Livermore Falls.

I am testifying today **in support of LD 2226** because updating the Essential Programs and Services (EPS) funding formula—something that has not seen meaningful reform in decades—is an important step toward addressing the property tax crisis facing our state. School budgets are the largest share of property tax liabilities in most communities across Maine and the EPS formula directly correlates to the bill homeowners receive in the mail each year.

Property taxes are the greatest driver of unaffordable living in my community. Over the past year—whether at an American Legion bean supper, in church, or at a high school basketball game—no matter who I am talking to, one theme comes up again and again: the rising cost of property taxes and the pressure it places on households. I talk with retirees on fixed incomes who worry each year whether they will still be able to afford to stay in the home they worked their whole lives to afford. I talk with young families who want strong schools for their children but are already stretched thin trying to keep up with rising costs. The current system is not working for anyone.

The implications of the broken school funding formula are not solely financial. To my alarm, conversations about school budgets are increasingly sowing division and resentment between neighbors. I have sat through hours of school budget workshop meetings in my district over the past two months and watched friends and neighbors get into heated debates over relatively small adjustments to a \$26 million budget. The current system has pitted taxpayers against teachers, parents against administrators, and community members against the very schools they care deeply about. The State of Maine must act swiftly to fix this broken system.

One of the most promising aspects of this bill is the effort to incorporate household income into the ability-to-pay calculation rather than relying primarily on property valuation. In my community, property values have risen significantly while household incomes have not kept pace. Many residents are what economists call “house rich but cash poor.” Property valuations alone are not a fair assessment of a community’s ability to pay.

Further, communities like mine that have faced economic devastation in recent years deal with unique challenges including increased poverty rates. These challenges require additional support staff and services, which cost money and add further stress to the system. The opportunity for large, structural reform presents a rare chance to address the root causes of many of these issues.

Before preparing this testimony, I consulted with our school superintendent in RSU 73 to get his perspective. He shared that he finds the ability-to-pay reform a benefit for our community but also expressed concern about potential changes to special education funding. Even though special education enrollment in our district has stabilized somewhat, those costs remain significant and can be unpredictable, especially for smaller districts when students move in or out.

I share those concerns and hope the committee continues working with districts to ensure these changes do not create unintended financial risks which could undermine the benefits brought by transitioning to an income-drive formula.

But overall, I believe this bill moves in the right direction.

This moment requires leadership to bring about needed relief to school administrators, teachers, students, and taxpayers alike. Because when the state funding formula does not reflect the real economic conditions in communities like mine, the result is that neighbors end up arguing with each other over school budgets when the real problem lies in how the system itself is structured.

Updating the EPS formula is an important step toward easing that pressure and ensuring we can support both strong schools and sustainable property taxes.

Thank you for your time and for your work on this issue.

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