

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Sarah Southard and I am a Nurse Practitioner and Mother of two girls age 5 and 10 who attend Reiche Elementary School in Portland.

I am here to testify in support of LD226 to help legislators improve the current education state funding formula and support economically disadvantaged students in our state. I support a regional adjustment to more accurately reflect the cost of hiring and retaining educators. I support adding a measure of income/poverty level so funding is not solely based on property value. This would help municipalities where property values have increased much faster than incomes. I commend the committee for revisiting the formula in such timely manner.

I attended public schools in Maine and graduated from Sanford High School. After graduation, I moved to Boston to attend Simmons College School of Nursing. I remember a sudden sense of anxiety as I realized I was one of 2 or 3 women in my freshman English class who had not attended a private high school. To my surprise, not only was prepared for this English class, but because of the educational opportunities I was given at Sanford High School to take Advanced Placement Science Classes, my first-year biology, microbiology, chemistry and anatomy and philology classes were in fact a review. I am convinced that the science education I was provided in high school and access to excellent teachers allowed me to become the healthcare provider I am today. When I had the opportunity to move home to Maine 8 years ago, not only was I excited to provide healthcare in the community but I had no doubt that my children would be provided a great education in Maine Public Schools.

Adequately funding public education creates opportunity for all and is a corner stone of our democracy. Where the current funding formula is falling short, I encourage the committee to address this by passing LD226.

Thank you for your time.