

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 2226

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Joseph Long
MSAD 35/RSU 35

March 9, 2026

**AN ACT TO AMEND THE ESSENTIAL PROGRAMS AND
SERVICES SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA**

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Lucy Richard
MSAD 01

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Eric Waddell, and I serve as Executive Director of the Maine School Boards Association, representing more than 1,700 school board members from across our state. I am here today on behalf of MSBA's Legislative Committee to testify in support of LD 2226.

VICE PRESIDENT

Kim Bedard
Kittery

Let me begin by acknowledging that this is a thoughtful but delicate proposal. School funding is one of the most complex and sensitive policy areas before the Legislature. While the majority of our member school administrative units will benefit from the updates proposed in this bill, we also recognize that some communities—particularly in parts of southern coastal Maine—may experience an increase in the local share required to support their school budgets. We understand that concern and appreciate the care this committee must take when evaluating proposals that affect communities differently.

**IMMEDIATE PAST
PRESIDENT**

Faye Anderson
RSU 22

However, when viewed holistically and through the lens of fairness and long-term sustainability, the Maine School Boards Association believes LD 2226 represents an important and necessary step forward.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Eric F. Waddell

Maine's Essential Programs and Services funding formula has not been meaningfully updated in more than a decade. In that time, the economic landscape of our state changed dramatically. Costs have shifted, property values have skyrocketed, labor markets have tightened, and the cost of living varies widely across regions. LD 2226 modernizes the regional adjustment within the formula, so it better reflects today's economic realities. In doing so, it helps ensure that the funding model more accurately reflects what it costs to educate students in different parts of our state.

MEPRI also highlighted a glaring issue with the current formula that must be fixed: the Regional Adjustment is currently underpaying schools to the tune of \$39 million per year. For many communities, local taxpayers have effectively been covering those costs already. Updating the formula begins to correct that imbalance.

Equally important, LD 2226 introduces a greater measure of fairness by recognizing that property values alone do not always reflect a community's true ability to support its schools. In many communities, property values tell one story, but the number of families struggling to get by tells another. By incorporating community income levels into the formula, this proposal takes a more realistic and equitable view of local capacity.

Finally, the bill directs additional support toward areas where we know needs are greatest. It increases funding for economically disadvantaged students and updates transportation funding that has lagged behind actual costs in recent years.

MSBA would urge your committee to be cautious about some of the proposed changes to special education funding in LD 2226. On this point, we urge you to listen to MEPRI and wait before including any cap on yearly "Maintenance of Effort" adjustments. Without firm data on the impacts of this change, we worry a cap could lead to unintended consequences – and potentially fewer resources for students with special needs. Funding and staffing are already in short supply. The last thing we want to do is make it worse. Without a full understanding of the impact of this change, do not include the cap in this bill. More time and study are needed.

Maine's school boards are deeply committed to providing every student—regardless of zip code—with access to high-quality public education. While no funding formula will ever be perfect, LD 2226 moves Maine closer to a system that is more modern, more equitable, and more responsive to student needs.

For those reasons, the Maine School Boards Association respectfully urges the committee to support LD 2226.

Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to Maine's students and public schools. I would be happy to answer any questions.