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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 278

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A PROCESS FOR THE CONSIDERATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGES TO MANDATED INSTRUCTION OR TRAINING FOR STUDENTS

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Steven Bailey, executive director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in support of L.D. 278.

Curriculum mandates are some of the most difficult bills for our associations to oppose because they often deal with subjects we agree are important. The issue is time and capacity.

This bill would set up a review process that would first allow the Department of Education to identify whether or not a given subject is already part of our System of Learning Results. That is the first place we go when confronted by a curriculum mandate, and often the sponsor is simply not aware the topic already is included.

That process would begin after the initial public hearing.

If it is determined the curriculum proposal is not already covered under the Learning Results, the second part of this bill would explore what it would take in time, staff resources and money to add a requirement. We believe this will be helpful to you and the sponsor to understand the scope of the request and its impact on the school day. It also would inform a potential fiscal note.

As important, it would give a vehicle to the commissioner and her curriculum experts to do a comprehensive analysis of a proposal that would inform their decision to either support or oppose the legislation.

This professional approach to reviews of curriculum mandates would give a fair analysis of whether a proposed addition to the curriculum is needed or feasible. Information gathered also could inform the review of the Learning Standards already required in statute.

Our one suggestion on the bill is that it explicitly call for a superintendent and school board member to be part of the review committee. MSMA would be happy to recommend candidates, if this bill passes.

As a matter of legislative history, this bill did pass both the House and Senate in 2020, but was never signed into law after the Legislature shut down due to Covid.