



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

A. PENDER MAKIN
COMMISSIONER

February 24, 2021

Senator Matthea Daughtry, Co-chair
Representative Michael Brennan, Co-chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

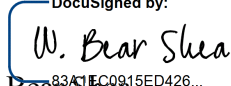
Dear Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Joint Committee,

LD 261, Resolve, Directing the Department of Education To Study Truancy Trends in the State and Develop Recommendations for Increasing Student Attendance and Reducing Truancy reflects in Section 1: In partnership with Maine Education Association, Maine School Management Association, and Maine Principals Association, the Department shall study truancy trends and make recommendations to school administrative units (SAU) for increasing attendance and reducing truancy. In Section 2: The Department shall submit a report to the Committee on January 4, 2022 with recommended legislation based on its evaluation of attendance and truancy trends (in Section 1).

Truancy and attendance are areas where existing statute, reporting, and guidance are currently available to SAUs. The Department collects attendance data from SAUs on a quarterly basis. Data points can be disaggregated into state, SAU, and school specific reports, which may include demographic data.

Examining trends in truancy and attendance, specifically with respect to exclusionary practices is consistent with the Department's mission and vision. With the Office of School and Student Supports (OSSS) focusing on social/emotional learning, restorative practices, cultural responsiveness, and student mental health, the Department is well-positioned to continue providing support and technical assistance to the field in an effort to reverse negative trends in attendance and truancy data. Most recently, the OSSS reconvened the Truancy, Dropout, and Alternative Education (TDAE) advisory committee. This group represents educators, school leaders, school board members, and community leaders. Over the next several months, the TDAE advisory committee will work in partnership with educational organizations statewide to study statewide truancy trends and advise the Commissioner of Education on the development of best practice approaches to improving student attendance and reducing truancy.

The Maine Department of Education is happy to provide additional information and answer questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,
DocuSigned by:

Bear Shea

Mental Health and School Counseling Specialist
Office of School and Student Supports

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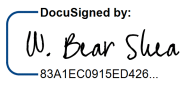
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