

TESTIMONY REGARDING

L.D. 350

AN ACT TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF COURSES REGARDING AUTISM SPECTRUM
DISORDER THAT COUNT TOWARD SPECIAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATION

AND

L.D. 639

AN ACT TO IMPROVE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Senator Rafferty, 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. 350. and L.D. 639.

Our associations support the intent of both bills and are testifying on them together because they both affect Chapter 115, The Credentialing of Education Personnel.

L.D. 350, which allows up to three courses on autism to count toward the certification requirements for special education, recognizes the number of children being diagnosed as autistic has been growing steadily over the last several decades. According to the national CDC, it affects 1 in 68 students. It is so prevalent the University of Maine has developed a special graduate certificate for autism disorders.

L.D. 639 makes changes to the credentialing requirements for school counselors to include training around family or intimate-partner violence. It would be helpful to know if such courses are available in the state.

We are testifying on the bills together because we want to make a point about process when it comes to updating Chapter 115. That process has been deliberate and painstaking. The Education Committee will have the opportunity to review and vote on the final documents. What we hope to avoid is an ad hoc approach to rewriting the certification rules when the process has been very intentional, with input from parties affected by the various certifications, including representatives from our association, special education directors, and teachers.