

Gaby Grekin
38 Mills Road
Kennebunkport, ME 04046

March 25, 2021

To the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

As a Maine-based national consultant on Human Capital practices for school districts, I'm writing to share my strongest possible support for LD643.

Maine school boards have tremendous amounts of power and responsibility handed to them, despite a lack of any required skills, experience or qualifications to serve. We take parent and community volunteers and expect them to somehow possess or obtain the knowledge, judgement and expertise necessary to undertake one of the hardest tasks in education — the successful management and oversight of district leaders.

Board members vary widely in their ability and capacity to serve, yet all share this formidable and vital responsibility. In my experience (both nationally, and here in Maine) the absence of structured guidance and supports often leads boards to err in the extremes in their efforts to provide effective superintendent management: either they micro-manage and meddle unhelpfully with a strong superintendent who requires and deserves their confidence and support; or they remain inexplicably and problematically hands-off with a weak or dysfunctional superintendent who requires more muscular oversight.

The right altitude of effective management is an admittedly hard balance to strike. Boards need a structured framework that clearly states the expectations, combined with concrete resources, tools, and direct guidance to instruct them on how meet their obligations. Strong superintendent goal-setting is essential; goals must be strategic, measurable, ambitious, relevant and time-bound (SMART). The goals must measure outcomes (results) instead of inputs (activities to be completed) and must result in meaningful student outcomes. They shouldn't measure *how* superintendents will do the work; they must measure the *results* of what superintendents aspire to achieve. Effective goal-setting is one of the most challenging areas of human capital education management, and board members need and deserve support in how to do it effectively.

In my work as an education management consultant, I see again and again — in district both large and small, wealthy and underfunded — a notable struggle amongst boards to oversee and evaluate superintendents effectively. The root causes range from a lack of will (via misguided emphasis on “supporting” versus overseeing) to a lack of skill (via awareness and acceptance of their obligation detached from expertise). LD643, as currently proposed, would provide an excellent foundation to ensure a baseline expectation for boards, combined with models and templates to support their efforts.

Most board members have the best intentions, and dedicate enormous amounts of time at great personal sacrifice in order to serve. Please support this bill to give them the tools they need to ensure that Maine superintendents are managed effectively. Our teachers and students' success depends on it.

Best,

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