

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 52

AN ACT REGARDING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING NEGOTIATIONS BY PUBLIC EMPLOYERS OF TEACHERS

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Eileen King, deputy 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. 52.

This bill, which is making its second appearance before the Education Committee due to the disruption caused by COVID, represents a compromise around the issue of negotiating education policy. It respects both teachers, and the state's School Board members who are responsible for adopting policy for their districts.

The first part of the bill is narrowly focused on just two areas of educational policy – teacher preparation and planning time and teacher transfers. It makes those areas of educational policy negotiable only if both the School Board and the bargaining agent agree to negotiate.

It was important to the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association that this bill be very narrowly focused on just those two areas of education policy because boards and administrators need the flexibility to set policies on a myriad of other circumstances that can change quickly.

The second part strengthens and clarifies the meet-and-consult process around all other areas of education policy. The Maine School Boards Association at its Delegate Assembly adopted a resolution in 2019 in support. It reads:

“The Maine School Boards Association is committed to providing training and support to its members on ways to validate and improve the meet-and-consult process when adopting or amending education policy. The goal is to improve communication around key policies that most directly affect teachers and review and collaborate with staff on policies that need updating.”

In closing we want to acknowledge that the compromise reached on this bill was due, in no small part, to Commissioner Makin and Rep. Brennan, who brought a working group together made up of what we call our educational partners i.e. Maine Education Association, Maine Principals' Association and Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities.

That partnership has only grown stronger during the COVID pandemic, and we meet every week to share concerns and propose solutions on a variety of education and logistical issues that can be best addressed together.