Testimony in Support of LD 1259: "An Act To Restore a School District's Ability To Authorize New Types of Schools and Programs"

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Nick Murray and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for hearing LD 1259 today, and for allowing me the opportunity to testify.

The right schooling option can mean a world of difference for a child. Maine's current policy governing charter public schools does nothing more but rob hundreds of students of the potential to find their passion and become active citizens. We owe it to the future to simulate innovation in this space.

While Maine's charter public schools currently serve more than 2,600 students, even in February 2020, before the pandemic, more than 600 students were on a waitlist. This is a demand-based problem underlying the current approach to charter schools. After all, the satisfaction level of these students and their families should be the way we measure the effectiveness of our charter schools.

LD 1259 strikes a common-sense compromise: empower local school boards and community leaders to initiate the process for authorizing a charter school in their district if they deem it necessary.

We may disagree on the need for more charters on the statewide level, but how could the legislature and the charter school commission keep up with issues facing every Maine community and school board?

Surely, the elected officials of local school boards can be trusted to determine when their district needs to explore other options for their students. Education must be driven at the most local level possible to ensure accountability to the community's needs.

Please deem LD 1259 "Ought To Pass" and empower those closest to students to work for their benefit. Thank you for your time and consideration.