



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

JANET T. MILLS
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COMMISSIONER

April 13, 2021

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

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

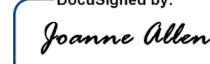
LD 1207, An Act To Maintain the Current Level of Education Funding seeks to change the funding for School Administrative Units (SAU) for FY 22. The intent of the bill is to buffer the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student enrollment, which drives subsidy allocation. More specifically, rather than using the average of the October 2020 and October 2019 subsidy counts, the bill proposes the usage of the average of the October 2019 and October 2018 subsidy counts for any district that had a decline in enrollment from October 2019 to October 2020.

After running several different methodologies and considering the impact on SAUs statewide, the Administration proposed language with Part C of the budget language to address the declining enrollment (as a result of the pandemic) in an equitable manner to support the students who are present and receiving services, while maintaining the state share of the total cost of education and allowing for a lower mill expectation/required local share. The one-year revision to the teacher salary matrix for grades 1-5, adjusted the student to teacher ratio from 17:1 to 16:1. With much of the pupil decline from October 1, 2019 to October 1, 2020 within grades 1-5, the adjustment considered the need to preserve staff in the face of the temporary declining enrollments. The adjustment helped to boost the per pupil rate to offset the decline in pupils and avoid impacting the mill rate. This approach doesn't redistribute funding away from communities that experienced an increase in student population.

The ED 279s released to SAUs on January 25, 2021 reflected the administration's approach outlined above. More specifically, they reflected the grade levels of the pupil decline and raised the per pupil rate on page 1 of the ED 279, which was carried throughout the funding formula and offset the pupil decline. District leaders and school board members have been working collaboratively for the past several months to pass local budgets. LD 1207 would cost approximately \$24,000,000.00 in state funds, and \$16,000,000 in local funds which would raise the mill expectation (required local share) from the enacted 7.90 to 8.04.

The Department will be available to answer any questions during the work session.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Joanne Allen

Joanne Allen
Director, School Finance and Operations

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