

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 651

AN ACT TO STABILIZE STUDENT COUNT IN MAINE'S SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA

AND

L.D. 1207

AN ACT TO MAINTAIN THE CURRENT LEVEL OF EDUCATION FUNDING

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. 651 and 1207.

Both these bills have the intent of protecting school districts, and ultimately property taxpayers from a decrease in state aid because of a drop in enrollment counts. That is critical because a drop in enrollment doesn't mean you can have less staff or provide fewer course offerings

L.D. 651 addresses the issue by using a three-year average for pupil counts when a district has a decrease of 10 percent or more in a single year. L.D. 1207 allows that if the enrollment is down in 2021-2022, the pupil count for the previous year will be used.

We support the intent of both bills and appreciate they take into account that districts and regions were affected differently by COVID. That was true when all school buildings were closed during the start of the pandemic and when in-person learning was brought back largely in a hybrid way – some in person and some online – due to required safety rules around spacing.

While some parents simply didn't reenroll their children creating a drop in overall enrollment, although we are not sure of the magnitude of that problem. The department has the most accurate information on statewide numbers.