

Mayor Rollins, Augusta
Mayor Casavant, Biddeford
Mayor Cayer, Lewiston
Mayor Snyder, Portland
Mayor Glaser, Rockland



Mayor Doyle, Saco
Mayor Mastraccio, Sanford
Mayor Pride, South Portland
Mayor Foley, Westbrook

Testimony in Support of LD 1114

“An Act To Require the State To Meet the Mandatory 55 Percent Contribution to Schools”

Presented by Michael Foley, Mayor of Westbrook
April 13, 2021

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Michael Foley, Mayor of the City of Westbrook. I am here today on behalf of the Mayors’ Coalition to testify in support of LD 1114, and specifically to support the State honoring the funding of 55% of education.

The Mayors’ Coalition is a nonpartisan group formed in 2012, and currently includes the Mayors of nine Maine communities - Augusta, Biddeford, Lewiston, Portland, Rockland, Saco, Sanford, South Portland, and Westbrook – with a combined population of nearly 250,000. The Coalition advocates for state and federal policies that recognize the important role that Maine cities play in providing vital services to Maine people across our state, and the positive impact Maine cities have on the economic strength of our state. The Coalition seeks to work in partnership with Maine’s state and federal elected officials to meet the needs of Maine people.

We appreciate the incremental increases that the Mills’ Administration and the Legislature have supported in recent years to the state’s portion of education funding. However, we note that state funding at 51.83%, is still well short of the statutory requirement of 55%. This gap in funding falls to municipalities to make up through the only source of funding we have for such purposes, namely the property tax. This places a significant burden on our residents and business.

We come here to share a specific example that is happening currently in my community. We are faced with what appears to be a status-quo budget provided by our School Committee which would result in the largest increase to our property tax rate in decades. In addition to the financial challenges members of our community are facing caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, the last thing we would want to do coming out of this potential recession is raise taxes. Ultimately, a combination of spending reductions and tax increases might be necessary for us to overcome this challenge. Examples like this are happening in communities all across this state.

We continue to implore this Committee, your legislative colleagues, and the Administration to work together to meet the state’s statutory obligation of providing 55% of funding to education. When the state under funds education, it causes municipalities to cut other areas within our budgets and/or increase property taxes as in the example shared. With improvements in education funding and municipal revenue sharing, this will help our communities to better manage growth in the property tax and allow us to continue to deliver critical services without drastic impacts.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We urge you to support LD 1114. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.