

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 1114

AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE STATE TO MEET THE MANDATORY 55 PERCENT CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOLS

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. 1114.

Our members have long supported the required 55 percent contribution to schools, understanding that is a statewide target and the percent by district is affected by pupil counts and property values. Currently we are at 51.78 percent.

We have come close before – progress that was stalled in the recession 10 years ago.

A reasonable strategy is to create that ramp, understanding that hitting 55 percent is not a stable target. Inflation affects the components of Essential Programs and Services, which is the base that determines percent state share. Raising starting teacher salaries to \$40,000 is having an impact, but is an essential investment, if we hope to have a robust workforce as current teachers retire.

The second part of this bill deals with current law that calculates state share two different ways.

The first is the intended calculation that looks at the percent share of programs covered under the Essential Programs and Services funding formula.

The second was added in fiscal year 2011-2012 and takes into account the unfunded actuarial liability for teachers in the Maine Public Retirement System. This calculation makes the state share look more robust, but is not true to the intent of reaching 55 percent of EPS.