

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 1318

AN ACT TO INCREASE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING EDUCATION DISRUPTION

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. 1318.

Our associations supported a version of this bill last session that never made it through the process because of Covid, and we support it today. We can only expect the problem of homelessness has become worse due to job loss during the pandemic, and that adds urgency to its passage.

L.D. 1318 focuses on getting a child through school and to graduation. This goal is key if we hope to see these students get the education they need to move onto meaningful work that supports them and a vibrant Maine economy.

As school leaders we believe the requirements in this bill for school districts are doable. Essentially it asks us to help a student understand how many credits she or he has accumulated and assist them in getting the classes they need to meet graduation requirements. It also encourages flexibility on those requirements, requiring schools, for example, to reward credit for similar required courses from different districts. Flexibility is key for a student who has had to move around.

The bill also identifies that migrant and immigrant students can be at higher risk for not graduating, although we must note the numbers we've seen show migrant and English Language Learners had graduation rates at around 80 percent or a bit above in 2018-19 – and that is to be applauded.

We urge your support for this bill. It is the right thing to do for students and for the state.