

TESTIMONY REGARDING

L.D. 1502

AN ACT TO CLARIFY SAFETY ISSUES IN SCHOOLS WITH RESPECT TO HEALTH-RELATED STATES OF EMERGENCY

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 regarding L.D. 1502. School superintendents were opposed to the bill because we do not understand its intention nor do we believe there is a need for the law; school boards were neither for nor against.

Maine school superintendents have worked from the start of the pandemic to keep students safe and have done that job admirably based on the low number of cases that can be attributed to school spread.

We worked with the Department of Education and were participants in a group that helped develop a plan to keep students safe and reopen schools after the initial shutdown in March of last year.

That plan called for compliance with requirements around physical distancing; wearing a mask except when eating; proper hand washing; and, protective equipment for those staff who cannot keep distance from a student because of the student's needs.

They have complied with those requirements and are the reason we have had low transmission rates in schools. Case counts in any given community largely have been attributed to community spread, not spread in the schools.

We also believe no mandate is needed to have administrators provide reports to the CDC or their school boards. The protocol already in place when there is a school outbreak is to communicate to the CDC through the school nurse. Superintendents also have and would continue to communicate regularly with their school boards around COVID cases, guidance and action taken to keep schools safe.