

**MAINE
PRINCIPALS'
ASSOCIATION**



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*MPA is an Equal
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TO: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
FROM: Maine Principals' Association Legislative Committee
RE: Neither For Nor Against LD 829: An Act to improve Behavioral Health Support for Students in Public Schools
DATE: March 28, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Dr. Holly Blair, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Principals' Association – Professional Division. The MPA represents more than 800 PreK-12 principals, assistant principals, CTE directors and assistant directors of public and private schools in Maine.

The MPA Legislative Committee is neither for nor against LD 829. We agree that it would benefit students if school guidance counselors and social workers would work with them 80% or more of their time, as well as have a person on staff trained to be an Assistant Behavior analyst. We also agree that lowering the ratio to 250:1 would also work well for students.

We have significant concerns about the bill. First, while we support the concept of the bill, we do not support the requirement of making this happen. This takes away from the flexibility that schools need with some of these positions. There are not enough social workers or guidance counselors to meet the 350:1, let alone a lower ratio. Finally, if a staff person is not able to step up and take on the role of the Assistant Behavior Analyst, we are afraid that this will be one more thing added to the plate of building administrators.

For these reasons, the MPA is Neither For Nor Against LD 829.