

Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association**In Support of*****LD 154 - An Act Regarding Special Education Funding for So-called Minimum Receiver School Administration Units*****April 12, 2023**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Rebecca Lambert and I am providing testimony in support of LD 154 on behalf of Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) elected 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). For reference, the LPC provides direction to the advocacy team at MMA and establishes the position on bills of municipal interest.

Special education costs are rising each year and funding these programs has become increasingly more challenging. Contributing to the struggle overall are the increases in the number of special education students, more specialized programs, and reduced state and federal funding.

Federal funding in particular has been flat funded since 2005, and with the most recent rate of inflation, this would mean that federal funding has decreased significantly, with the need only increasing. Small and more rural communities suffer increased financial hardships relating to special education costs as students with special needs move in and out of their schools. Likewise, low subsidy districts fund more of their special education costs than other districts.

The bill before you would increase special education funding from 50% to 55% in fiscal year 2022-2023 and succeeding years. This additional funding would help many districts across the state fulfill their financial requirement to provide education to persons with disabilities.

MMA is also supportive of the part of the bill that directs the Department of Education to examine the methodologies used to determine when a school administrative unit is a so-called minimum receiver. Continual examination of the funding formula to determine its equity is always supported by local leaders.

Thank you for your time and for considering the municipal perspective on this issue.