

TO: EDUCATION & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

FROM: ERIC WADDELL, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, KITTEERY, ME

DATE: APRIL 12, 2023

RE: LD 154 – AN ACT REGARDING SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING FOR SO-CALLED  
MINIMUM RECEIVER SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION UNITS

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On behalf of the citizens of Kittery and the Kittery School Committee, I am providing this written testimony in support of LD 154. Kittery municipal school department serves approximately 1000 students who reside in Kittery. Our FY23 budget is approximately \$20 million. Historically, Kittery has received no subsidy from the State of Maine for regular education costs; as such, we are identified as a 'minimum receiver' based on the EPS funding formula.

I cannot deny that the valuation of Kittery has grown remarkably over the past 10 years. According to data gathered from the District's ED279, the town's valuation has increased by approximately half a billion dollars since 2014. Therefore, the local contribution for Kittery is well above the allocation year after year.

The valuation of the town, however, does not tell the whole story. Kittery is proud of the fact that its school district is home to the largest population of military-connected students of any SAU in Maine. That represents 18% of the District's student population. It is no secret that our military families live on a very modest income. A disproportionate piece of their income must be used to pay for housing in Kittery where demand for affordable housing is high and supply is remarkably low. In other words, many of Kittery's residents can barely afford the cost of housing within the town, and picking up nearly 88% of the cost of educating its K-12 students placing a remarkable burden on them.

As a minimum receiver, Kittery receives about 8% of its total operating expenses from the State of Maine. This subsidy currently represents 50% of the total cost of special education. Increasing that percentage would certainly help SAUs like Kittery who are feeling pressure from local taxpayers to cut expenses in order to lower the local burden on taxpayers. The last increase of 5% (from 45% to 50%) came in FY21. Ideally, this adjustment for minimum receivers would be even greater to help offset the burden on local taxpayers.

I fully support LD 154. Furthermore, I urge the Committee to overhaul the EPS funding formula to take into account factors other than local property valuation. Median household income, for example, would paint a much more accurate of what a community can afford for its local contribution to education costs.



Eric Waddell  
Kittery School District  
LD 154

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