

**Testimony of Jessica Anderson, Count ME In
In Support of LD 1527**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Jessica Anderson. I am a resident of Dresden and the Executive Director at Count ME In.

Today, I'm submitting testimony in support of LD 1527 "An Act To Promote the Community School Program"

I spend my days collaborating with schools and community partners across Maine to improve attendance rates. Last year, over 28% of students missed more than 18 days of school. One of the most common reasons students in our rural schools are absent is to attend health appointments and access other related service providers. I've been working with a school to develop a plan to support a child in a Western Maine school who misses a day each week to access specialized services that are not available in his local community. Community schools are transformed into hubs that are better equipped to provide support for students and their families.

Children and young people have more than just academic needs. Community Schools support the whole child, while increasing student outcomes.

Community Schools enable students to **benefit from the resources a local community has to offer in a way that complements their education, and the community benefits in return.** By bringing together these resources and services, Community Schools can offer medical, dental, and behavioral health care, as well as provide extended learning time and enrichment, and job placement services – all within the school.

Community Schools are an investment in children, families, and our shared future. Quality Community Schools support better attendance, higher student achievement and graduation rates and lead them to become contributing members of society.

Thank you for taking time to hear my perspective on the importance of Community Schools in Maine. Please reach out to me with any questions about how Community Schools can help improve student attendance.

Jessica Anderson
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