

Ann Hanna  
Gerald E Talbot Community School  
LD 1527

Testimony of Ann Hanna, Gerald E. Talbot Community School 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 Ann Hanna. I am a resident of Portland and the principal of the Gerald E. Talbot Community School in Portland.

Today I am submitting testimony in support of LD 1527 “An Act to Promote the Community School Program”. This bill is important to me because as the principal of a community school, I know first hand how impactful the community school strategies are to a child’s success. Community Schools are an effective and efficient strategy for improving education and ensuring that ALL students, no matter who they are or where they live, have the tools and opportunities they need to thrive.

Talbot Community School has been implementing community school strategies for just about two years.

A significant focus of our implementation plan has been to increase opportunities for students to engage in after school activities. We have successfully developed partnerships with several community organizations to provide over 200 hours of afterschool programming for more than 160 students or over 44% of our population. These programs promote a wide variety of academic and social-emotional skills and have helped to support positive peer and adult relationships as well as a deeper sense of student belonging to our school and community. Our after school tutoring program has been incredibly successful. On average, students who have participated in after school tutoring have shown growth of over 10 points from fall to winter in academic assessment data, and anecdotally, staff are noticing increased confidence, engagement and willingness to take on new academic challenges in class.

Another successful strategy of our community school model has been to increase family engagement as we welcomed families and the community back into school after the pandemic. These efforts include bringing back welcoming events such as the back-to-school popsicle party, Parent Information Nights, and community resource fairs, as well as the initiation of two new event series; Coffee with the Principal and Homework Diners. In addition, we have created a comprehensive resource inventory on our website where parents can find information about many different types of available resources within our community. These activities, events and resources have all helped students and families increase their access to staff, school supports and community resources, and solidifies our identity as a community hub.

Gerald E Talbot Community School’s adoption of the community school model has been made possible through grants from United Way and Department of Education, which funds key positions such as our Community School Coordinator, After School Coordinator and pays for our after school and family engagement activities. Community Schools are an investment in children, families, and our shared future. Quality Community Schools support higher student achievement and graduation rates

and lead our children to become contributing members of society. Although funds like those from United Way have supported our model so far, they will eventually run out –the funding provided by LD 1527 will help ensure Gerald E Talbot Talbot Community School and districts across Maine can continue to serve “the whole child” and improve both academic outcomes and the well-being of the students and families in their communities.

Thank you for your commitment to LD 1527 and to Maine’s children. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ann Hanna  
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