



Date: April 28, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

The Coalition for Community Schools is an alliance of national, state, and local partners across education, youth development, health, civil rights, and other sectors that unite around the vision of school as centers of communities where everyone belongs and thrives. On behalf of the Coalition as its National Director, I submit this letter to state our support for L.D. 1527, An Act to Promote the Community School Program.

Our staff collaborated with Maine community schools advocates starting in 2014 to convene key state partners to learn about community schools, and there was strong interest and leadership at the time led by then Senator and now Representative Rebecca J. Millett.

We are excited about the progress since then in Maine toward community schools, and the opportunity to deepen that progress, with this bill and funding, to bring this evidence-based, effective approach to more schools across Maine.

We see a similar demand and interest at the national level. Earlier this month, 159 organizations from the national to local levels signed onto our letter to Congress in support of \$500 million for the Full-Service Community Schools program for FY 2024, a strong showing of the deep support for the strategy at the national level. Funding for the federal program has been steadily increasing over the years, including a doubling of funding last year (from \$75 million in FY 2022 to \$150 million in FY 2023), demonstrating the support in Congress for this effective strategy. And it was referenced in the American Rescue Plan Act as a strategy for states and districts to consider implementing, and many more districts and states have since invested in it.

Community schools are both an evidence-based strategy with core research-based elements, as well as a hyper-local strategy that is customized to each unique school community. Through collaborative leadership, community schools unite students, families, school staff, and the broader community for student success.

I urge you to pass this legislation and provide funding for this legislation so more Maine students and families can benefit from this effective strategy.

Thank you for your service and your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jose Munoz".

Jose Munoz
Director, Coalition for Community Schools
Institute for Educational Leadership