

Testimony in Support of LD 1748
“An Act to Reform the School Budget Referendum Process by Limiting the
Circumstances in Which Referenda Occur”

Good afternoon Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Scott Harriman and I am testifying in support of LD 1748, “An Act to Reform the School Budget Referendum Process by Limiting the Circumstances in Which Referenda Occur.”

School budgets currently undergo many levels of scrutiny. Here in Lewiston, the elected school committee members approve the details of the budget, the city councilors (who are elected by the same voters) approve the bottom-line dollar amount, and then a tiny percentage of voters turns out and approves the budget at the ballot box. Interestingly, no other municipal department’s budget, nor the city budget as a whole, must be confirmed by a special election.

Mandated school budget referenda needlessly waste taxpayer dollars and municipal staff time in order to conduct elections with extremely low turnout. If a significant percentage of voters is unhappy with the school budget — even after the already-numerous steps of a public process overseen by two groups of officials whom they have elected — then a petition can be circulated for a referendum vote to be held.

Please vote Ought To Pass on LD 1748. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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