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## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 762

### AN ACT TO CLARIFY THE RESPONSE TO TRUANCY UNDER THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AND CHILD PROTECTION ACT

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Victoria Wallack, communications and government relations director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in support of L.D. 762.

We like you are concerned about truancy and absenteeism, particularly over the last year. Truancy appeared to be on the decline in the first part of the 2019-2020 school year, but then COVID hit.

The Department of Education, through its Maine School Safety Center has done outreach and education around truancy in Maine – an issue that was exacerbated by COVID. It also was a reality that truancy was very difficult to determine when school buildings were closed and the online learning that was provided required stable internet and in-home devices.

We have worked consistently with the DOE throughout the pandemic on COVID-related issues, and the department has reconvened its Truancy, Dropout and Alternative Education Advisory Committee. It includes superintendents, principals, teachers, and representatives from adult education, where students who need credits to graduate often turn. The Department of Health and Human Services along with the Department of Labor also serve on the committee.

This bill adds to the protections around students through this unprecedented time and we welcome the support.