



**Testimony of Allen Sarvinas
Parents' Rights in Education Maine
Committee on Housing
LD 1609**

**Increase Funding for the McKinney-Vento Program Ought To Pass
April 21, 2023**

Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and the distinguished members on the Committee on Housing, my name is Allen Sarvinas and I serve as director of Parents' Rights in Education Maine (PRIE). We are a nonpartisan, non-profit 501 (c) (3) that advocates for parents' rights in education. We are here this morning in support of LD 1609 which is a two-year pilot program that provides access to McKinney-Vento Liaisons in efforts to prevent student homelessness.

Subtitle VII-B of The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act authorizes the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program and is the primary piece of federal legislation related to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. It was reauthorized in December 2015 by Title IX, Part A, of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

There is a pointed summary with input regarding the data at the end of our submitted testimony.

This program is designed to explicitly press upon parents to be “active partners in making decisions to help their child in school” creating a common purpose with Parents' Rights in Education Maine. Our primary mission is to elevate parents' rights in education which is represented in Chapter 10 of the McKinney-Vento toolkit for local education agencies (LEAs). It reminds “districts that receive a McKinney-Vento subgrant may use those funds to increase the meaningful involvement of parents and guardians in the education of their children”. [42 U.S.C. § 11433(d)(10)] This is based upon the long-standing number one trend across all successful educations which is the educational environment within the home.

We believe increasing funds to meet the demand is necessary on the basis that every child has a right to an education while concurrently they are under



compulsory education statutes. Satisfying both is impossible for a large portion of this homeless student demographic creating an entrapment situation for families. We want to encourage the funds to apply through lenses of working through the family unit, so it produces the same returns as the federal Reconnecting Families and Dads Initiative (RFD). Homeless children need academic intervention as early as possible, but the approach is critical or else the negative outcomes from disassociation from family reduce academic ability. From our experience, those with successful outcomes rising out of a homelessness state are energized to become an advocate for others creating a wonderful cycle of human care not to mention adding additional return on investment for the state.

We want to encourage LEAs to review all data sharing policies and agreements on a regular basis to ensure that they are consistent with state and federal laws such as The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

We thank Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and the distinguished members on the Committee on Housing on serving the state of Maine and encourage the committee to vote ought to pass for LD 1609.



Program summary:

Circumstances which meet the criteria of a homeless student may be summed in five broad categories which are shared housing with others, involuntary hotels, motels, trailer parks, or camping grounds, shelters, and the last two are predicated on structures not designed for humans to live.

The purpose is to guarantee access to education and educational support, the right to enroll in school immediately, allows them to attend classes and participate in all school activities, and continue in their [current] school when the family relocates.

The authorized activities may be summarized in fourteen parts including, but not limited to, tutoring, before- and after-school assistance, developmentally appropriate childhood education programs, and excess cost of transportation services.

Various factors impact data on students who experienced homelessness, especially here in Maine with less than 1.5 million residents. The Maine data center is currently unavailable, so we submit two considerations in reviewing the data as it becomes available which are 1) Maine has invited many new persons into the state with their accommodations satisfying the definition of student homelessness and 2) public schools in the state are down over seven thousand students. To wrap up the data, Parents' Rights in Education has experienced the program leaving us with an impression the employees perform admirably and is a bright spot within the Maine educational programs.