

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 1742

AN ACT TO PROHIBIT A STATE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM ACCOUNT FROM RESTRICTING USER COMMENTS

May 2, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Steven Bailey, the Executive Director of the Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 1742, An Act to Prohibit a State Social Media Platform Account from Restricting User Comments.

Social media is an important tool for local school districts, which use platforms such as Facebook or Instagram to share information on school events, awards, sports events, board developments, and stories within our classrooms. In this online age, social media sites serve as a crucial connection point, helping parents and community members better understand public education.

Many school districts allow for free and unfiltered commenting on social media. But many cases have arisen where comment sections have descended into conflict, with residents arguing and fighting within comment sections. Amid more and more of these occurrences, some districts now opt for a blanket ban on any commenting on social media posts. This allows a school or district to continue to provide crucial information to the community, without having these posts be associated with hate or conflict.

While the wording of L.D. 1742 is vague, it would appear to no longer allow this practice that has proven to be effective in school districts across the state. Our associations worry that this could actually lead to fewer community members being informed. Residents have told us that infighting in comment sections may lead them to unfollow a specific account. We worry that if a school district is forced to allow for unlimited, unfiltered comments, it may lead community members to disengage, stop following an account associated with a school, and ultimately be less informed.

L.D. 1742 would ban an important strategy that school districts are using to keep their communities informed while avoiding conflict, and we would ask you to reject this bill.