

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 100

AN ACT TO INCREASE THE EXPENDITURE LIMIT FOR THE INFORMAL BIDDING PROCESS FOR THE SELECTION OF PROFESSIONAL, ARCHITECT AND ENGINEER SERVICES

February 10, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and members of the State and Local Government Committee. I am Robbie Feinberg, the director of communications and government relations for Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Superintendents Association and Maine School Boards Association in strong support of L.D. 100, An Act to Increase the Expenditure Limit for the Informal Bidding Process for the Selection of Professional, Architect and Engineer Services.

We believe this bill makes common-sense updates that will allow our school leaders to more quickly assess their infrastructure needs and make needed repairs to protect our staff and students.

The vast majority of Maine's schools were built before 1970. This aging school infrastructure has become a crisis, with districts being forced to shut school buildings in recent years due to health and safety issues placing students and staff at risk.

Despite limited funding to address these challenges, our superintendents and school boards work diligently to inspect and ensure our schools are safe. But emergency situations – from mold to radon – do arise. And our schools often require repair, renovation and alteration.

One of the first steps in this process is often to call in a professional – such as an engineer or architect – to assess the situation. We are thankful that when these services cost less than \$25,000, our administrators are permitted to call a pre-qualified service provider to perform this work, instead of first advertising or putting out a request for qualifications, which could add weeks or even months to a project timeline.

This bill recognizes that inflation has pushed up the cost of many of these professional services, and it would increase the expenditure threshold to \$50,000 moving forward. This would be enormously helpful for our schools, providing them with more flexibility and ensuring they receive the professional guidance and support required to protect our school infrastructure, staff and students.

We urge you to support this bill. Thank you, and I am happy to answer any of your questions.