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### *Testimony of Representative Holly Eaton*

#### **LD 849: An Act to Establish a Recall Process for Public School Board Members**

#### ***Before the State and Local Government Committee***

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and members of the Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Holly Eaton, and I represent House District 15, which includes the communities of Deer Isle, Stonington, Brooklin, Tremont, Southwest Harbor, Frenchboro, Swan's Island, Isle au Haut and Vinalhaven. I am submitting this written testimony in support of LD 849, "An Act to Establish a Recall Process for Public School Board Members."

In addition to serving in the Maine Legislature, I have also served two terms as a school board member in my hometown. That experience, along with my current role, has given me a deep appreciation for the importance of ethical, community-minded leadership in our schools.

Several years ago, our community experienced a situation that deeply underscored the need for a mechanism like the one proposed in LD 849. A sitting school board member publicly posted anti-LGBTQ+ content on social media—content that was harmful, discriminatory, and out of step with the values of inclusivity and respect that our schools strive to uphold.

There was widespread public outcry. Parents, educators, students, and community members came together to urge the board to take action. But what we quickly realized was that there was no formal mechanism to hold the board member accountable. Without a recall process, we were left with limited tools—primarily public pressure and the hope that the individual would choose to resign.

District 15: Brooklin, Deer Isle, Eagle Island Township, Frenchboro, Southwest Harbor, Stonington, Swan's Island, Tremont, Isle au Haut, Vinalhaven

The absence of a clear and fair recall process made an already painful situation worse. It left our students, especially LGBTQ+ youth, feeling unprotected by their own school leadership. And it left our community without a meaningful way to restore trust in our school board.

LD 849 provides a pathway to correct that. It offers communities a democratic tool to hold school board members accountable for actions that are inconsistent with their duties and community values. This isn't about political disagreements—it's about basic standards of conduct, public trust, and protecting the well-being of our students.

In my current work as a legislator, I continue to support young people—many of whom are navigating bullying, harassment, and even doxxing. I know firsthand how critical it is that leadership at every level creates safe, affirming environments for all students.

I urge the committee to vote in favor of LD 849. It is a timely and necessary step toward ensuring integrity and accountability in our public schools. Thank you.