

The Maine Heritage Policy Center
Testimony In Favor of LD 1425 (As Amended)
“An Act To Maintain the Integrity of the Department of Education by Prohibiting Its Promotion of Policies and Practices That Are Not Based on Rigorous Peer Review and Analysis, Limiting Acceptance of Private Funding in Implementing and Influencing State Policy and Retaining the Home Rule Powers to School Administrative Units”

Senator Millett, Representative Kornfield and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Adam Crepeau and I serve as a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for the amendment to [LD 1425 proposed by Rep. Sampson](#).

This bill enshrines common sense education reforms into law to promote transparency, public accountability, and reinforce local control.

First, this bill prohibits DOE from implementing any new initiatives that have not undergone rigorous statistical analysis or fail to achieve clearly identified student outcomes. This data would be made available for public scrutiny. Contracts with outside entities, including nonprofits that exert substantial policymaking influence but about which the public knows little or nothing, would be published online as well. These measures should hardly be controversial. Ensuring that policies and programs are backed by credible research and sharing those results with the public should be central to responsible and transparent governance.

This bill also directs DOE to withdraw from the New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC). Powerful private donors -- like the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and the Gates Foundation¹ -- use the NESSC to advocate for policies that often lack statistical support, have not been peer-reviewed by experts, and are developed in secret. The NESSC has long pushed for proficiency-based diplomas and was one of the primary backers of the Common Core standards, which were developed with little transparency by unqualified people. The years of chaos and public outcry against the Common Core in Maine illustrates how at odds the NESSC's objectives can be from the interests of our students. Pulling out of the NESSC is long overdue.

¹<https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/new-england-secondary-school-consortium-receives-1-million-from-gates-nellie-mae-education-foundations>

We the people of Maine...

THE MAINE HERITAGE POLICY CENTER

This bill's final provision, to study how to return home rule powers back to municipalities, goes hand-in-hand with combating unaccountable big-donor influence in our schools. As Maine's public education landscape has shifted over the last few decades, local control -- once a bedrock principle of public education -- has sharply eroded. DOE's influence in district matters has grown and local policymakers' ability to enact programs and policies in the best interests of their constituents has suffered. We welcome a collaborative effort between DOE, local districts, and the MMA to consider concrete steps to decentralize control over Maine's public schools.

I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on this bill. Thank you.