**The Maine Heritage Policy Center**

**Testimony to Support LD 1860**

**“An Act To Establish a Process for the Consideration and Implementation of Changes to School Curricula”**

Senator Millett, Representative Kornfield and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Adam Crepeau. I serve as a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1860.

The Maine Heritage Policy Center supports this legislation because it would give teachers, administrators and content specialists a larger role in informing the legislature regarding changes to school curricula. If a bill establishes or substantially expands mandated instruction or training, this committee would conduct an informal review of the legislation and direct the Commissioner of Education to assemble a committee composed of teachers, administrators and content specialist to review whether the changes are already addressed under current law.

If the proposed changes are not already addressed, the committee would be charged with analyzing the proposal’s impact on the “availability of resources, staff expertise, the number of required courses of study that exist in accordance with the system of learning results and the available hours of instruction.” Thereafter, the Commissioner would submit the review committee’s findings, if any, to this committee for further consideration.

This process would help filter out changes to school curricula that are well-intentioned but are also burdensome to teachers and administrators. The legislature needs the expertise of teachers, administrators and content specialists to determine if the capability to teach new curricula currently exists or could be reasonably constructed.

When this committee heard testimony for LD 1050 last session, the Department of Education said, “While the DOE supports the teaching of the Holocaust, the DOE respects the local control and the ability of school districts to make curricular decisions and therefore does not traditionally mandate specific topics or content regarding what should be taught.”[[1]](#footnote-0) The Maine Heritage Policy Center agrees that, while some subjects are worth teaching, state government should give local school districts enough leeway to make specific decisions about what is to be taught.

In addition, we urge the committee to consider retaining the legislative public hearing process for changes to school curricula — Section 1 of this bill would allow this committee to conduct an informal review without input from the public. Public hearings, no matter the subject of the bill, are intrinsic to Maine’s legislative process and should be kept in place. The testimony and audio recordings of public hearings for each bill should then be delivered to the Commissioner’s review committee for analysis. This would give members of the public and interested organizations a chance to make their case in support or opposition to the proposed changes.

While The Maine Heritage Policy Center typically opposes legislation that would grow the size and scope of government, this bill simply provides another check on school curricula changes that are made by the legislature. Barring the language that nixes public hearings, this bill would create a more thorough process for considering changes or additions to school curricula. The bill would also create measures to preserve local control for individual school districts. For those reasons, The Maine Heritage Policy Center urges the committee to vote, “Ought to Pass” on LD 1860.

1. <http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getTestimonyDoc.asp?id=120155> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)