## MAINE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION



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## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

## L.D. #742

## AN ACT TO AMEND THE REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT VALIDATION PROCESS

Senator Millett, Representative MacDonald and members of the Education Committee, I am Elaine Tomaszewski, associate executive director of the Maine School Management Association. I am here to testify on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in support of L.D. #742.

We support this bill because it is the best attempt we've seen to address the flaw in current law that allows a school district to start a new school year without an approved budget.

It is still a relatively rare occurrence that school budgets fail at the ballot box, but we fear it could become more widespread, particularly as we ask local taxpayers to pick up a greater percentage of school funding.

There have been several instances where budgets have been rejected three, four and even five times before finally being approved as late as November, and in one case January.

Current law already says that the last budget approved by the regional school budget meeting and submitted to the voters is the school's operating budget until a budget is finally passed. This allows communities to commit property taxes, as required by law.

L.D. #742 puts a deadline on that process, and says that after at least two unsuccessful attempts at the ballot box, the last budget submitted to the voters becomes the budget for the school year on August 30.

Our hope is that by putting a deadline in place, it will add some urgency to the process. Attempting to run a school on a temporary budget during the school year creates too much uncertainty and is not good for staff or students.

We ask that you support this bill in the firm belief that it will expedite the voter approval process, not circumvent it.