

Testimony in opposition to LD 307

Ladies and gentlemen:

From my experience of having worked with middle and high school students here in Maine for over 25 years, I have long been concerned by the unequal educational opportunities offered here, especially in reference to the more thinly settled and less affluent parts of the State, where financial issues make the providing of quality education difficult and to those students who are difficult fits for traditional school settings. Because of these concerns, I have been greatly encouraged by the expansion of opportunity that has been offered by Maine's charter school program to date, and concerned by proposals, like LD 307 that would curtail or limit these opportunities.

With schools throughout the State having to cut back their facilities or offerings due to either financial or population issues, and hundreds, maybe thousands, of students feeling alienated in traditional school settings, I strongly believe that we must consider new vehicles for advancing Maine students in the society and job markets of the 21st century. Maine's nine current charter schools, while not perfect, are certainly offering promising answers to these vexing questions. Returning to a "one-size-fits-all" educational system and ignoring those school districts and students who don't fit into it, is not a satisfactory alternative.

I am not questioning the motives of the supporters of LD 307, but am expressing an opinion based on working with Maine middle school and high school students through tutoring, organizing career programs, and advising the alternative high school within the MSAD #28 system, participating in the Camden Conference in the Classroom statewide program, and in the governance of private and specialized schools in the Midcoast area.

Very sincerely,

Charles W. Graham  
Camden; Tel: (207) 236-1059