



State of Maine
131st Maine Senate
Senate Republican Office

PRESS BRIEFING – EDUCATION
JANUARY 31, 2023
WELCOME CENTER/PRESS ROOM
AFTER SESSION (approximately 12:30 p.m.)

What: Education Issues and Policy Initiatives

Who: Sen. Trey Stewart, Sen. Lisa Keim, Sen. James Libby, Sen. Matt Pouliot

Policy Goals covered in today’s briefing:

Parental Rights & Competitive Options/School Transparency
Improving Educational Opportunities & Curricula, From STEM to STEAM

Introduction (Sen. Stewart)

Background (Sen. Libby)

Senate Republicans are concerned with recent trends that have appeared in education over the course of the past five years. From lower standardized test scores and a system that limits choices for parents to school and university investments that have not kept pace with asset depreciation, there is a great deal of work to be done.

According to the “Nations Report Card,” Maine has now experienced a fall below the national average in mathematics average scores for fourth-grade public school students and are at the national average for eighth graders. In both cases, results are considered by experts to be well below proficiency. A decade ago, Maine was above the national average in these scores.

Results in English have experienced a similar downward trend in Maine. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the rate of decline of proficiency measurements across the board was greater in Maine than nationally. These facts have elevated the importance of long-held Republican calls to reduce state mandates and other classroom disruptions, in order to promote stability in academic settings.

Parental Rights & Competitive School Options (Sen. Libby, Sen. Keim)

Policy: To provide parents more transparency regarding the curriculum taught and the right to explore more options to choose from.

Solutions to explore:

- “Bill of Rights” for parents of public school children
- School Board and Administrator transparency in curriculum and pedagogy
- Lift of moratorium for charter schools and virtual enrollment
- Competitive school options for parents (see Arizona and Iowa)

Legislation:

- An Act to Support School Choice by Establishing Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (Libby)
- An Act to Eliminate the Educational Purposes Exception to the Dissemination Prohibition of Obscene Matter to Minors (Libby)
- An Act to Provide Transparency in Public School Curricula (Keim)
- An Act Regarding Parental Rights in Education (Keim)
- An Act Regarding the Right of Parents to Withdrawal Their Children from Public School Classes or Activities that Include Controversial Viewpoints (Keim)

Improving Educational Opportunities & Curricula (Sen. Libby, Sen. Pouliot)

Policy: An improved emphasis on career and technical education (CTE) and science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics in education (STEAM) to provide an uninterrupted workforce transition.

Solutions to explore:

- A focus on these essentials with fewer disruptions
- Stronger efforts to keep class sizes small
- Ensure that money from the state is flowing into the classrooms to improve educational outcomes, rather than bureaucracy
- Expand trades and skilled education from high school through community colleges

Legislation:

- An Act to Validate Alternate Pathways to High School Graduation by Including a Student Who Switches to Adult Education (Brakey)
- An Act to Ensure Statewide and Equitable Access to Experiential STEM Education (Pouliot)
- An Act To Establish a Minimum Wage for Certain School Teaching Professionals (Libby)

Closing remarks, Q/A (Sen. Stewart)