

Legislative Sub-committee of the Mount Desert Island Regional School System
Contacts: [Judy Sproule](#), [Brian Hubbell](#)

Legislative update - April 9, 2011

Selected policy issues with related bills (*and local positions in response*):

Teacher evaluations and probationary hiring period

- LD 444: [An Act To Require Annual Evaluation of Public School Teachers](#)
- LD 976: [An Act To Require 3 Years of Experience in a School Administrative Unit before a Teacher May Receive a Continuing Contract Offer](#)
- L.D. 1322: [An Act to Extend Probationary Period for Teachers](#),
[Committee work session Mon, Apr 11]

We support regular rigorous teacher evaluations and would find some value in a three-year probationary period before placing teachers on continuing contracts. However, a four-year probationary contract would be unduly long, potentially weakening the focus of probationary evaluations and risking administrative discontinuity.

Dividing, rearranging, or enlarging the risk pools for school employee health insurance

- LD 404: [An Act To Assist School Administrative Units in Providing Health Insurance to Their Employees](#) [Ed Committee Work Session: Apr 15]
- LD 844: [An Act To Provide Affordable Health Insurance for Municipal and School Employees through Competition](#), [Insurance Committee hearing Apr 5]
- LD 1326: [An Act To Allow School Administrative Units To Seek Less Expensive Health Insurance Alternatives](#)
- LD 857: [An Act To Include Teachers in the State Employee Health Insurance Program](#) [Insurance Committee hearing Apr 5]
- LD 619: [An Act To Allow School Administrative Units and Educational Advisory Organizations To Participate in the State's Group Health Plan](#), [Ed Committee work session, April 15]

Generally, we oppose dividing up insurance risk pools to benefit certain smaller groups at the expense of others. (On this issue we may not be aligned with MSMA.) However we support allowing schools access to larger pools such as the state employee plan.

Homeschool access to public Special Education services

- L.D. 1197 [An Act To Amend Standards for Participation in Certain Public School Services by Students Who Are Homeschooled](#) [Public hearing Apr 5]

We support providing homeschooled students within our district access to public education programs including special services as long as there is precise planning and agreement over the scope, accountability and responsibility for such services and that they are served under similar terms and conditions as our regular students.

Public subsidy for private religious schools

- LD 1092: [An Act To Allow a Tax Credit for Tuition Paid to Private Schools](#)
- LD 1287 [An Act To Create a Scholarship Granting Organization Tax Credit](#),
[Taxation Committee work session Apr 13]

On principle, we oppose entangling government support with religion. We also oppose diverting public support for education to private enterprises. As individuals, we have offered [hearing testimony](#) and [published opinion](#) in opposition.

Reduced pay and extended work hours for students

- LD 516: [An Act To Amend Maine Law To Conform with Federal Law Regarding Employment Practices for Certain Minors](#)
- LD 1346: [An Act To Enhance Access to the Workplace for Minors](#)
[Labor Committee hearing Apr 15]

With insufficient time already in the school week, we oppose having students, already vulnerable in the workplace, further torn by additional obligations made by employers. We plan to present testimony for the April 15 hearing.

On-line learning

- LD 675: [An Act To Establish Multidistrict Online Classes in Maine](#)
- LD 938: [Act To Permit Public School Online Learning Programs To Accept Nonresident Tuition Students](#)
- LD 977: [Resolve. To Analyze the Value of Distance Learning in a Rural Environment](#)
[Work session: Apr 14]

Generally, we support allowing schools the opportunity to develop and avail themselves of collaborative on-line classes. We remain wary, however, of implementing such programs as an excuse for [cutting support for classroom teaching in favor of unproven private business offerings](#).

School employee pension contributions and benefits

- LD 513: [RESOLUTION. Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To More Equitably Fund the Liabilities of the Maine Public Employees Retirement System.](#)
- LD 1133: [An Act To Reform the Maine Public Employees Retirement System.](#)
[Appropriations hearing: Apr 11, 10AM]

We continue to oppose measures that unfairly burden our school staff and make it difficult for us to retain good teachers and to attract new ones. As individuals we have published opinion on this topic: [Effects on schools from Governor's proposed cuts to teachers' benefits](#) and [The future of public teaching](#)

Charter Schools

We have not yet seen any legislation on charters. But apparently [at least one bill](#) will be published in the next few weeks. We remain deeply interested and concerned that charters not be used to weaken commitment to the public school system or, [as the Governor has suggested](#), as a vehicle to make an end-run around restrictions against public funding of private religious schools.

List of bills of interest:

- [Bills still In Committees](#)
- [Bills reported out of Committees](#)
- [School reorganization bills](#)
- [EPS and school funding bills](#)