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STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

A. Pender Makin, Commissioner
Maine Department of Education
23 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0023

June 3, 2021

Dear Commissioner Makin:

This session, the Education Committee considered LD 444, An Act to Create Parity between Department of Education Recommendations and Maine Principals' Association Guidelines for Sports. While the Committee ultimately voted unanimously "ought not to pass," the Committee appreciates the concerns raised by the bill and wants to take the opportunity to address these concerns with the Department.

The Committee understands that there was considerable confusion this past fall among school personal, parents and students regarding the COVID-19 related restrictions under which students would be allowed to play sports. That confusion apparently stemmed from discrepancies in guidance issued by the Department and the Maine Principals Association. The Committee learned that some school boards decided not to allow fall sports due to confusion around which guidelines should be followed.

While the Committee certainly hopes that the challenges experienced this year were time-limited, it is possible that a similar event could recur. Given that potentiality, the Committee respectfully requests that the Department of Education meet with the Maine Principals Association to formulate plans for aligning recommendations for school sports in the event of a future public health emergency, so as to avoid the confusion experienced this past year. The Committee also respectfully requests that the Department provide an update on its progress on this issue by January 3, 2022.

We appreciate your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Sen. Joe Rafferty
Senate Chair

Rep. Michael F. Brennan
House Chair

c: Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham, Winter Harbor
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Mike Burnham, Maine Principal's Association
Chelsey Fortin-Trimble, Department of Education