1 August 2017

The 128th Legislature of the State Of Maine
State House
Augusta, Maine

Dear Honorable Members of the 128th Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing LD 919, “An Act to Establish the Summer Success Program Fund.”

This bill demonstrates the argument I have made about education spending since I became Governor. Whenever we increase funding for education, they always ask for more, move the goalpost and make attainment of the “55 percent” truly impossible.

This bill is a brazen attempt to create a new, unfunded state and local mandate to offer summer programs with extended learning opportunities. While unfunded, the bill creates a future obligation for the Department of Education to develop a funding process that includes eligibility calculations and determinations. This bill does not provide funding, but rather creates the leverage for future legislators to say, “Well, the state created the program, so now it needs to meet its commitment to fund it.” Even more concerning, it seems to invite the issuance of “social impact bonds,” a funding vehicle the state has no experience with and seems intended to increase the state’s financial commitment to these local programs.

In addition, real implementation of this bill would require additional staff at the Department of Education, which has not been provided in this bill. This bill poses additional specific program and fiscal responsibilities on the Department and school districts at a time when there are many state and federally required statutory obligations.

Finally, the recently enacted biennial budget already made changes to the funding formula to target an additional five-percent weight for extended learning that benefits economically disadvantaged students. Before implementing this new section of law and measuring the results, this bill now seeks to impose a similar mandate and create a future financial liability.

Instead of creating a new government program that increases the burden on taxpayers, let’s instead hold school districts accountable for results based on the additional $162 million in education funding the budget just provided to schools.

For these reasons, I return LD 919 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,

Paul R. LePage
Governor