



## THE MAINE EDUCATIONAL CENTER FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

GOVERNOR BAXTER SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

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Dear Families and MECDDHH/GBSD staff:

I am writing to share an important update regarding Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) programming for students currently attending Lyman Moore Middle School regarding middle or high school for next fall.

After careful consideration of student needs across Maine, MECDDHH/GBSD will be relocating host site programs to Lewiston beginning in the 2026–2027 school year. The following changes will occur, beginning in September, 2026:

- Students who have been served through the Portland-based Deaf Education Program (DEP) at Lyman Moore Middle School will have the option to attend Lewiston schools, where our Deaf Education Program will be expanded and strengthened. Those students will also have the option to attend school in the town or city where their family resides.
- York School Department will serve as a Home site rather than a Host site, due to an insufficient number of students for a Host site.
- Students who have been served by the Brewer Community School (BCS) program will attend school in the town/city where their family resides.
- **All students have the option to attend their home district sites.**
- Families whose high school-age child qualifies for Deaf Education Programming but resides more than 50 miles from Lewiston may wish to consider completing an application for their child to reside with a host family that lives closer to Lewiston Schools.

Each of these difficult decisions reflect several important factors that are shaping how we are able to serve students now and into the future:

### **Shifting Family Demographics**

Across Maine, more families of DHH students who would benefit from intensive Deaf Education Programming are residing farther away from Portland, mainly now in the Lewiston/Auburn area. Aligning our programming where the overwhelming majority of students live allows us to better support access, community, and consistency.

### **Strengthening Student Services**

The MECDDHH/Lewiston program will bring together a comprehensive team of Teachers of the Deaf/HH, ASL interpreters, educational technicians, and related service providers skilled in the field of Deaf Education. By consolidating services in one primary location, we can build a

stronger, more cohesive program that supports language development, academic growth, and social connection, while meeting the staffing demands of complex programming for students.

### **Addressing Workforce Challenges**

There is a significant shortage of specialized Deaf Education staff nationwide, and there is a worldwide shortage of qualified ASL interpreters. Maintaining multiple small programs across different locations has become increasingly unmanageable and is currently impacting consistency of services. Concentrating resources in Lewiston allows us to provide more stable and reliable staffing for a critical mass of students with the most intensive needs.

### **Ensuring Program Quality and Sustainability**

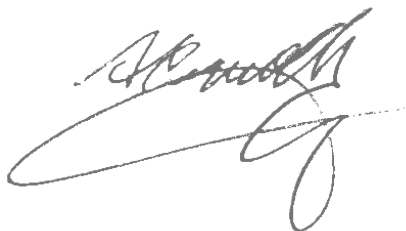
Secondary programs (middle and high school) require complex staffing and coordination. Even small student groups require a full team of professionals to ensure appropriate access and support throughout the school day as students move from teacher to teacher and room to room. By focusing our efforts in Lewiston, we are better able to maintain high-quality services while also supporting students more deeply and effectively across the entire state.

I recognize that this change may bring questions and require planning for your family. Please know that our team is committed to supporting each student and family through this transition. We will work closely with you and your child's IEP team to ensure continuity of services and a transition to the Lewiston program (or home district) that is as smooth as possible. And, as always, we will work closely with you and your child's IEP team to ensure understanding of future educational options for programming for your child.

This decision is not a reflection of the partnership and support we have received from Portland Public Schools, York School Department, or at Brewer Community School. We are extremely grateful to the staff, students, and families in these communities who have opened their hearts and schools to our students. These changes represent our responsibility to use limited resources in a way that best serves DHH students across Maine.

If you have questions or would like to discuss your child's transition, please do not hesitate to reach out. We are here to support you every step of the way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Connolly', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Steve Connolly  
MECDHH/GBSD Executive Director