

Testimony
Wendy Jacques
RSU#13
LD 240

Senator Bellows, Representative Sylvester and other members of the Labor Committee, my name is Wendy Jacques, I live in Union, Maine and I teach fourth grade at the Ash Point Community School in Owls Head. I am here today to testify in support of LD 240.

My reason for coming today is rather simple. I love this profession and the passing of this bill could be crucial to addressing the teacher shortage and retention rates. As I'm sure you all know, attracting and keeping quality teachers is becoming increasingly difficult across the nation. Did you know that nearly half of all new teachers leave the profession within the first five years? Working conditions, including class size, lack of support, student behaviors, and adequate planning time are almost always cited as one of the top five reasons.

I'm a very active member of my school unit so I have the distinct pleasure of getting to know a lot of teachers both new to the profession and veteran. I meet them at new teacher orientations, on the various committees I serve, at special events, through being a mentor, & as a team leader. It's heart wrenching to say that hardly a day passes that I don't see a tear being wiped away from a teacher's cheek, hear a colleague say they don't know how much longer they can do the job, or even see strong, passionate, and extremely dedicated teachers share stories of feeling inadequate, overwhelmed, and defeated. As an elementary school teacher, just using the restroom can be met with a series of challenges during a school day. The passing of LD 240 - giving both school districts and bargaining units the ability to negotiate issues like planning time, duties, and class size would be a real turning point for Maine's educational system. It's no secret that instruction is more effective with proper planning and adequate time for analyzing and assessing student work. The passing of this bill would empower school units to invest in these things, which in turn, will have a direct impact on student learning and growth.

Effective teachers are always going to be a school systems' best tool for student success. This bill should easily gain full bipartisan support, it's one simple change, it doesn't force anything, it will just allow for conversations to be had that will potentially and dramatically improve working conditions in our schools - conditions that will help to both attract and retain quality teachers in the State of Maine.

Thank you for your time.