

DATE: December 6, 2025
TO: Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs
FROM: Sam Warren, UMS Chief External & Governmental Affairs Officer
RE: **Report on Stakeholder Discussions Regarding Student Teacher Compensation (Resolves 2025, ch. 88)**

Maine teacher licensure rules require substantive teaching experience before full certification is granted. In most Pathway I licensure options (State-approved programs), this teaching experience is fulfilled by a student teaching experience of at least one semester that requires the equivalent of full-time work for at least 15 weeks.

Nonetheless, **student teaching is not typically compensated in Maine**, despite the time and financial burdens it imposes on aspiring educators and the proven value it brings to their career preparation and to the PK-12 students and schools they serve.

To ensure this requirement does not continue to impose barriers to rigorous preparation and exacerbate the teacher shortage, LD 1327, *An Act to Improve and Expand Student Teaching Opportunities in Maine by Compensating Student Teaching*, proposed providing stipends to student teachers and their mentor (or cooperating) teachers. Given the Legislature's other priorities — including maintaining 55% State support for K-12 education and increasing investment in public higher education — the University of Maine System (UMS) volunteered to convene stakeholders to study the matter further and report back to the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs. To fulfil this commitment, codified in [Resolves 2025, ch. 88](#), *Directing the University of Maine System to Study Teacher Compensation*, the System convened two virtual meetings of stakeholders, including representatives from most public and private teacher preparation programs in the state, the Maine Education Association, the Maine Municipal Association, the Maine Principals Association, the Maine School Management Association, and the State Board of Education. We thank those who participated for their time, thoughtfulness, and commitment to supporting Maine educators.

Consistent with [the testimony provided](#) at the public hearing on LD 1327, the stakeholder meetings overwhelmingly confirmed the following:

- **Student teaching is essential to preparing qualified educators.** Stakeholders noted that it provides practical, hands-on field experience, supporting aspiring teachers as they build agency and eventually feel comfortable taking over classroom management. One school leader described it as “necessary,” noting

they could not imagine someone being qualified to teach without this experience. “There is nothing like having to make the constant decisions that teachers have to make,” said one former teacher. Certainly, other promising models exist — typically to support paraeducator pathways to licensure for positions such as educational technicians. These include residency, apprenticeship, and partial release of responsibility. However, they typically serve narrower ranges of aspiring teachers, such as older learners or current school district employees. They also typically provide compensation to participants, within and sometimes beyond their teaching experiences.

- **Student teachers add value to K-12 schools and students, especially given current workforce shortages and students' needs.** As one stakeholder said: “**They are an additional adult in classrooms that need additional adults.**” One principal noted that student teaching can directly lead to employment at the same school, with the experience serving as a probationary period during which both the candidate and the district can evaluate one another. However, some school leaders stressed they do not see student teachers as filling gaps created by workforce shortages, with one saying, “Yes, we’re benefiting, but it’s not filling a hole.”
- **Cooperating/mentor teachers are critical to the student teaching experience,** helping the student teacher process what they are seeing and develop their professional identity and networks. These teachers dedicate substantial time to development, feedback, and lesson reflection, yet often receive minimal stipends (reported as low as \$150 for a 15-week placement). This undervaluation actively contributes to a shortage of cooperating/mentor teachers, making it increasingly difficult to secure high-quality placements. It can also potentially disrupt a vital career transition for in-service educators moving from teacher to teacher leader to building-based administrator. Within that framework, mentoring student teachers offers a direct opportunity to provide supervision and performance coaching that enhances readiness for subsequent career steps.
- **The financial burden of unpaid, full-time student teaching is the single greatest barrier to traditional pathways to educator certification and contributes to the qualified educator shortage.**

The demographics of students pursuing door-opening higher education degrees in Maine are changing. Within UMS, for example, 42% of students are 25 and older. Students are also presenting with increasing financial need. Again, using UMS as an example, more than 50% of undergraduate students are eligible for

need-based federal Pell Grants. Many aspiring educators are also working to support themselves and their families while attending school to advance their careers and improve their upward mobility. The full-time student-teaching commitment can require them to forgo income for at least 15 weeks, while also paying for costs such as tuition, travel, childcare, and professional clothing. Some students must maintain paid part- or full-time evening employment while also completing what is effectively an unpaid, full-time job as a student teacher. Doing so can negatively affect the quality of the student teaching experience and the student's satisfaction with education as a career pathway, accelerating feelings of teacher burnout even before licensure is obtained.

As a result, Maine students are increasingly opting out of student teaching and traditional certification pathways, including by pursuing non-education degree pathways (e.g., Bachelor's of Liberal Studies) and/or seeking employment as teachers via conditional or even emergency licensure. One stakeholder characterized this as a "short-term solution but a long-term disaster," given the importance of the student teaching experience to preparing highly qualified educators. According to [this report](#), alternatively certified teachers are 25% more likely to leave the profession than those who have gone through a traditional teacher preparation program. Some students have chosen to abandon their goal of pursuing a career in education because they cannot afford the unpaid student-teaching requirement. Alternatively, some students who do student teach reject placements in rural districts because of travel costs, thus limiting their exposure to workforce opportunities in rural schools where they are desperately needed. To help meet immediate staffing needs and strengthen the rural educator pipeline, the University of Maine launched the Rural Substitute Teaching & Innovation Corps (RuSTIC). Part of its Rural Thrive initiative, funded through Congressionally Directed Spending secured by U.S. Sens. Susan Collins and Angus King, through RuSTIC, UMaine provides pay and travel incentives to encourage students to substitute teach in predominantly rural, distant placements.

Institutions of higher education (IHEs) have taken some steps to support their students through this required service period. For example, at the University of Maine at Augusta and some other UMS universities, [free clothing closets](#) ensure students can access the attire they need for professional learning experiences, such as student teaching. Meanwhile, Bowdoin College uses endowed funds to offset lost wages for student teachers and also to provide \$2,000 honorariums to cooperating teachers. Additionally, UMaine has leveraged philanthropic giving to provide student teachers with emergency funds to support housing and food

costs, reimbursements for travel student experiences, and to support the purchase of needed professional supplies (including instructional materials and professional wardrobes). Meanwhile, UMaine's Student MEA Chapter has started a food pantry, complementing food resources provided by the university and community organizations, to ensure aspiring educators have access to needed food during their student teaching experience.

- **Paying students for required student teaching would increase access to education careers, reinforce the professionalism and importance of teachers, and improve outcomes** by allowing them to focus more fully on their professional development as educators (rather than juggling supportive paid jobs and their student teaching). It would also move the field closer to the typical practice in other professional fields of providing some or all students with compensated internships/work-learning experiences.

No consensus was reached among the stakeholders engaged by the System on a recommended compensation structure for student and cooperating teachers, largely because there is no obvious near-term funding source. School representatives were adamant that districts could/would not bear the cost of compensating student teachers locally, and at the very least, that districts might limit placements if forced to absorb those costs. "If the district was responsible for paying, we would not take student teachers," said one school leader, with multiple other administrators reiterating this point. Additionally, both postsecondary institutions and districts expressed concern about the administrative challenges of providing weekly stipends and mileage reimbursement and raised questions about potential employment status and related benefits. Several also wondered how remuneration would change expectations of student teachers and noted that student teachers' contributions increase as their experience progresses. "**It's an exploitative process, but the entire educator preparation process breaks down if we change it,**" acknowledged one stakeholder.

It is worth noting that **many Maine employers do pay student interns**. For example, through [the Maine State Government Internship Program](#), administered by UMaine's Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, participating state and municipal agencies pay interns at least \$17 an hour during the 12-week, full-time summer experience. Meanwhile, through [the Innovate for Maine Fellows Program](#), also administered by UMaine, participating small businesses pay \$9,000 to receive summer fellows, who are paid \$19 an hour. (Please note: UMS is using a portion of its Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan funds to subsidize fellows for small businesses directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.)

Many other states have recognized that supporting student teachers financially will bolster their educator workforce pipelines and have taken action. This report includes an appendix with representative examples of more than a dozen programs implemented in other states to compensate student teachers, ranging from \$2,500 in housing and travel assistance for aspiring educators in Wisconsin to an \$11,000 stipend in Colorado. All are State-funded and administered by, or in partnership with, a State agency. Most are limited to residents of that state, and some require a service commitment, such as service in rural schools or a designated shortage area. The stipends appear to be set at a flat rate for the entire student teaching period, rather than a weekly rate as proposed in the original version of LD 1327. In 2025, Illinois enacted [a law](#) that provides that no institution of higher education shall establish or maintain any policy that requires student teaching for preservice teachers to be unpaid.

The commitments by other states demonstrate a recognition that **student teaching is not merely an academic requirement but a valuable, uncompensated labor** that also can significantly impede entry into the teaching profession. This evolving perspective acknowledges the financial realities faced by future teachers and underscores a policy-level recognition of a market failure in the teacher pipeline. We conclude from a review of these other programs and the legislative action that led to them that this strategic investment in the pre-service phase of teacher education is increasingly viewed as a critical, cost-effective strategy for ensuring long-term workforce stability and quality amid significant workforce shortages.

These models can inform Maine's future development of a compensation structure. In the meantime, the stakeholders engaged by UMS made the following recommendations:

Key Recommendations

- **Invest in Innovative Models:** To help mitigate Maine's severe educator workforce shortage, various innovative programs have emerged to create alternative pathways to the profession. One successful approach has been the Maine Teacher Residency, led by the University of Southern Maine (USM) and including eight public and private educator preparation programs in the state. Initially funded with one-time Congressionally Directed Spending secured at the request of UMS by U.S. Sens. Collins and King, the residency has already supported more than 100 new teachers in 34 school districts. Teacher residents receive a tuition stipend and are compensated by the district in which they are placed, primarily using existing funding for ed techs, substitute teachers, or conditionally or emergency-certified teachers. They are also matched with a mentor teacher, who receives a stipend and professional development support.

In the first three cohorts of the Maine Teacher Residency, 97% of the residents completed their residency year and were eligible for State teacher certification, and 88% became employed as teachers or remained in the program this year. One-time State appropriation is funding residents this academic year, and LD 696, *An Act to Bolster the Maine Teacher Residency Program*, is currently on the Special Appropriations Table and would provide ongoing funding for the program. Thomas College recently [launched a similar residency](#) and reports early success. State investment in alternative models like these builds on proven pathways and is a cost-effective solution to remove barriers to teaching for some aspiring educators and paraprofessionals, as many other states providing ongoing funding to residency programs have realized (e.g., Massachusetts, New York, California)

- **Support Cooperating Teachers:** Stakeholders agreed that a comprehensive approach to supporting student teachers requires a dual focus on both student and cooperating teachers. Considerable discussion focused on the incredible value of the service and support provided by the cooperating/mentor teacher, as well as the increasing challenges in finding in-service teachers to take on this oversight and mentorship responsibility. There was consensus that pay was not generally the barrier to participation, though meaningful stipends that recognize these teachers' contributions are important and deserved. Stakeholders recommended establishing a State-funded professional development/training program for cooperating teachers, similar to that provided to participants in the USM-led residency program, to demystify the experience, promote consistency and quality, and provide a needed community of practice and support. Ultimately, this would strengthen the experience and outcomes of student teaching for the student, the cooperating teacher, and the K-12 classroom. The Department/State Board of Education could also consider whether to award greater credit toward recertification contact hours for service as a cooperating teacher.
- **Tuition Relief:** The expectation that students must pay tuition and fees for the 12-15 credit hours they earn while student teaching exacerbates the burden of this requirement. While acknowledging the costs for postsecondary institutions to place, supervise, and support student teaching experiences, it was recommended that institutions of higher education consider waiving or reducing tuition and fees to immediately reduce the financial burden, which may need to be offset by additional State appropriations.

- **Need for Longitudinal Data:** A wide body of research reinforces the positive effect of a highly qualified educator on student achievement. While stakeholders in the UMS-convened conversations had anecdotal evidence of the improved outcomes associated with educators who had participated in a student teaching experience, there was a desire for data. Specifically, there is interest in understanding the retention rates of educators who completed a student teaching experience compared with educators who earned their teaching certificate through alternative pathways, as well as the outcomes of the K-12 students they engaged as pre-service and teachers of record. There was agreement among stakeholders that greater statewide longitudinal data is needed in Maine.
- **Student Teaching Study:** Given the scope of this study, UMS did not survey pre-service or newly in-service educators about the student teaching experience. It is worth noting that in 2023, the System-based Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) undertook research to understand undergraduate students' perceptions of education careers. [Their report](#), which is worth legislators revisiting, overwhelmingly concluded that compensation was the most significant deterrent to pursuing a career as a Maine educator. It also concludes that expanding and enhancing alternative pathways to certification and the classroom would help grow the size and skill of the educator workforce.

In other states, **compensating student teachers has been recognized as a necessary component of a comprehensive educator recruitment and retention strategy.** As [noted by the State of Oklahoma](#), “In the past decade, the numbers of those seeking traditional college pathways in education have dwindled. Compensating qualified student teachers in a paid internship format is one way to reverse this trend.”

As Maine continues to advance policies, programs, and investments to strengthen and grow its educator workforce and improve outcomes for K-12 students, consistent with the #TeachMaine framework, compensating pre-service teachers warrants consideration. Doing so would recognize the intensive nature of teacher preparation and the meaningful contributions student teachers make in classrooms. It could also foster more deeply integrated, mutually beneficial partnerships between teacher preparation programs and school districts and help ensure that Maine students have equal access to highly qualified educators.

Appendix: Sample Programs and Compensation Models in Other States

Increasingly, states are recognizing the barrier of unpaid student teaching and are implementing State-funded solutions, often combining stipends with service agreements. Initiatives include, but are not limited to:

State	Compensation Details & Structure
California	New initiative to provide \$10,000 stipends to eligible student teachers who complete at least 500 hours of student teaching will start in 206-27. Will be administered by Local Educational Agencies (LEAs).
Colorado	The Colorado Student Educator Stipend Program provides candidates placed in a 16-week academic residency with a stipend of up to \$11,000, and those in a 32-week academic residency with a stipend of up to \$22,000. Additional funds are available to assist with licensure costs. The Colorado Department of Higher Education distributes funds to EPPs based on the number of eligible students they each identify to the department. Programs then disburse the funds directly to candidates.
Kentucky	The Kentucky Student Teacher Stipend Program provides student teachers up to a \$5,000 stipend. It is administered by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority.
Maryland	Through the Maryland Educator Shortage Act , student teachers who commit to staying in the state can receive up to a \$20,000 stipend for a 10-month student teaching experience and must commit to working for two years in a high-needs school.
Michigan	The MI Future Educator Student Teacher Stipend Program provides up to \$9,600 per semester for required full-time student teaching. The State sends funds to the IHE, which applies them to the student's account.
Minnesota	The Minnesota Student Teacher Grants provide a one-time award of up to \$7,500 for student teachers who intend to teach in a designated rural school or licensed shortage area. It is administered by the Minnesota Office of Higher Education.
Nevada	The Nevada Incentivizing Pathways to Teaching Scholarships provides up to \$4,800 per semester for candidates in their final

	clinical year (pre-student teaching and student teaching). IHEs apply to the State for funds, and then determine and disburse awards.
New Jersey	The New Jersey Student-Teacher Pilot Program provides a \$4,500 stipend/scholarship for full-time student-teachers (referred to as clinical interns). The State sends funds to the institution, which applies them to the student's account.
Oklahoma	Through the Paid Student Teaching Program , the Oklahoma State Department of Education invests State funds to provide up to \$3,250 to support student teachers. Notably, \$1,625 is provided to the student teacher during their student teaching semester, while the second \$1,625 is a completion payment distributed to the public school district that hires the student teacher, which will then pay the student teacher directly.
Pennsylvania	The PA Student Teacher Support program provides \$10,000 to student teachers and requires a work commitment after graduation of at least three years. It also provides up to \$2,500 for cooperating teachers. LEAs pay student teachers (though IHEs receive a disbursement from the State to dispense the cooperating teacher stipends).
Utah	Through the Stipends of Future Educators program , the State pays stipends of up to \$6,000 per student teacher. Stipends may be prorated based on the length of the student teaching experience and funding availability.
Washington	Student teachers in Washington may receive a grant of up to \$8,000 if they complete their experience at a Title I public school in the state. There is no service commitment.
Wisconsin	The Wisconsin Rural School Teacher Talent Pilot Program provides a housing stipend of up to \$2,500 to live in a rural district during student teaching or travel reimbursement if commuting from their campus. It is administered by Cooperative Educational Service Agencies.