

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Kellie D. Bailey. I am writing on my own personal time in support of LD 258, An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025. In 2020, I left my job in public education after nearly 3 decades providing trauma informed speech therapy to children in Maine schools. It was my honor to join Commissioner Makin and to lead the state of Maine as the first Social Emotional Learning Specialist. Over the past 3 years I have had the privilege of working with some of the most dedicated human beings in the DOE and across the state. People who truly care first about people and building strong connections and relationships. This is the first time in the history of Maine education that we have prioritized social emotional learning and I was thrilled, energized, and impassioned to help bring this work forward. Within the first few weeks of accepting this job which came with a heavy responsibility of providing statewide social emotional learning resources as well as training to administrators, educators, and school staff in all things SEL, I was also informed that one of my colleagues had resigned and I would be expected to pick up 1/3 of her work responsibilities. Part of my colleague's job was to help schools follow bullying policy and to assist Maine families in equal access to bullying law and resources. I was not trained in bullying prevention or bullying law. The other two thirds of her position were dispersed to two of my co-workers, none of us received training or compensation for this additional workload, the position was not filled and we continue to manage this lift to date. Placing additional work assignments on the already full plates of MDOE employees with little support, is not best practice. Within 1 years' time, one of my colleagues who found it nearly impossible to perform the responsibilities of the job for which they were hired along with the added responsibilities for these new assignments, also resigned. That position remained unfilled for nearly a year and the hole left by their resignation fell to our team to carry. In the 3 years that I have been in the MDOE (all of which has been during one of the most unprecedented times in education due to the onset and continuation of COVID 19), several of my colleagues have left the department to return to jobs either in Maine schools where they can earn similar pay with greater time off, or to the private sector for higher pay. I am writing this to you to express my sincere concern with how my colleagues are contemplating, at alarming rates, the desire to leave state government service to return to the private sector because of wage disparity. The Maine Department of Education has specialized and dedicated employees who are dedicated to serving Maine schools in all capacities *for the greater good of our youth*. At the end of the day, regardless of how rewarding the job, if we are not fairly compensated for the work we do, a pat on the back and a message of gratitude doesn't help keep us motivated the job for long. Our highly skilled MDOE staff are leaving. We need to take a serious look at how we can turn this around. The work that we are doing here at the state is imperative to the future of our youth and humanity at large. By supporting our schools with folks who are dedicated and feeling well cared for by the department, we can continue to help schools do the work of ensuring that all youth know with 100% certainty that they are valued, safe, seen, cared for, represented, loved and to know that they truly belong. That's the work that we all do here collectively. I will continue to advocate for this work and to ask that we also be seen, cared for and valued for the work that we do every single day for the betterment of all Maine people in our schools and communities.

Thank you-

Kellie D. Bailey, Northport Maine 02/12/2023