



The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Kaitlin Young, Policy and Program Manager, Educate Maine

In Support Of

L.D. 335: "An Act to Improve Educator Certification Response Times"

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Kaitlin Young, the Policy and Program Manager of Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization. Our vision at Educate Maine is to ensure that all Maine people are prepared to succeed in their education and careers and can reach their highest educational potential. Through our work, we have been increasingly supporting efforts to strengthen, diversify, and grow the educator workforce to support every learner throughout Maine's education pipeline. To reach this goal, we must ensure that as we continue to increase our teacher recruitment efforts and the number of pathways to certification, we also provide the resources and support to the Department of Education to meet this demand.

During a recent testimony provided by Michael Perry from the Maine Department of Education, it was stated that the current certification process takes approximately three weeks from the time of a completed application submitted through the online Maine Educational Information System (MEIS) until the applicant receives either an evaluation letter requesting more information or a Conditional/Professional Certificate. With recent efforts to eliminate barriers and introduce pathways to expand the pool of qualified candidates, we anticipate an increase in the number of educators entering the workforce. However, it is crucial to note that this process may take even longer without additional resources and support, potentially impacting the employability of qualified candidates and discouraging individuals from pursuing or renewing their education certification.

Adding additional support to the process will also help certification specialists to respond promptly when irregularities or questions arise. When this happens, educators are not always able to receive the support or assistance they need to address any issues with their certification. Additional staffing would maintain the quality of education by addressing concerns and ensuring all Maine learners have equitable access to high-quality educators, especially with more certifications.

Therefore, I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of LD 335. We recognize that the current certification process for educators within the state may present challenges to meeting the growing demand for qualified candidates without introducing additional resources and support. Adding additional support and staffing to the certification process will help ensure prompt response times and maintain the quality of Maine's education workforce.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee and urge you to consider our recommendations as you work to support the growth and diversification of Maine's educator workforce.

Thank you for your time and consideration.