

Karen MacDonald
Westbrook
LD 1064
375 Pride Street Unit 14
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March 30, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

Please let this written testimony stand in support of LD 1064 - An Act to Increase the Minimum Teacher Salary. This bill is critical for Maine as we move into a crisis situation in our state related to the recruitment and retention of teachers.

As a retired teacher who served for 37 years in the City of Portland, the issue of teacher compensation has always been front and center. I remember days as a young teacher when my educator husband and I looked at our checkbook and wondered whether the \$31.00 in our checking account would cover a doctor visit for one of our children. I can't imagine beginning to teach today when the average rent and home prices in Maine have skyrocketed. No wonder schools in Maine are scrambling to maintain a full staff!

Low salaries play a role in the high rate of teacher turnover in Maine and cost the districts in other ways, as well. Research shows that a district invests roughly \$20,000 in onboarding new educators, a cost that the district does not recoup if educators leave in 1-5 years.

The cost of living in Maine is rising rapidly, particularly for housing. Homes in Maine increased an average of 10% in the last year, with the city of Auburn increasing almost 38%. This profession, which requires a college degree and continuing education, has not kept pace with the expenses of living in our state. Significant differences exist between average salaries in current dollars versus constant dollars. While there has been current dollar growth for educators in the years since 2012-13, when inflation is considered, the average classroom teacher salary decreased by an estimated 3.8 percent from 2012-13 to 2021-22.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Committee to vote unanimously "ought to pass" LD 1064. Thank you for considering my written testimony.

Sincerely,
Karen MacDonald
Retired Educator
2014 Maine Teacher of the Year