

The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Kaitlin Young, 2018 Maine Teacher of the Year

In Support Of

L.D. 1064: "An Act to Increase the Minimum Teacher Salary"

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs: I am Kaitlin Young, a Stetson resident, and I have spent my entire career as an educator in the state of Maine.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD #1064, "An Act to Increase the Minimum Teacher Salary," which is a critical step toward making the teaching profession more attractive to current and future educators and implementing ongoing statewide efforts to strengthen and support a well-prepared, diverse, and stable educator workforce.

As a Piscataquis County Teacher of the Year and Maine Teacher of the Year, I understand that the teacher shortage is a complex issue. In the course of 12 years working in a school in rural Maine, I had three different superintendents, multiple school and building administrators and watched continuous turnover of teachers at all grade levels prek-8. Despite all this, the teachers in that building showed up every day and did their best to serve Maine learners. In talking with other teachers across the state, my experience with teacher turnover is not unique.

[According to the Economic Policy Institute](#), the teacher shortage in the US is not due to a lack of qualified teachers, but rather the lack of teachers willing to work at current compensation levels given the increasingly stressful environment. Increasing the minimum teacher salary is a concrete investment we can make in our educator workforce as we continue to work together across all educational stakeholder groups to address the well-being of students and staff and take steps to address the working conditions and stress of being an educator. To attract and retain well-qualified teachers, we must close the salary gap between teaching and other professions requiring similar education, training, and experience. [The average starting salary for college graduates in 2021 was \\$58,862](#), while teacher salaries in the US are generally lower than those in other fields, creating a growing "[teacher pay gap](#)." The [average teacher salary in Maine](#) continues to rank toward the bottom compared to New England and across the nation. As the cost of living continues to rise, as the teacher shortage becomes more noticeable across districts, and as [other states increase their compensation](#), it is in the best interest of Maine to remain competitive in teacher salaries to create a sustainable approach to teacher recruitment and retention.

Competitively compensating educators by raising the minimum teacher salary is based on the recommendations of experts across education here in Maine and teachers in the field. The Maine Department of Education convened a committee of educational stakeholders to identify and develop strategies to build and strengthen Maine's educator workforce, including the [Teach Maine Plan](#), which is the result of contributions from education stakeholders throughout Maine, who provided feedback via multiple channels, including regional think tanks, focus groups, surveys, organizational meetings, and informal conversations. Theme 1 of

the Teach Maine Plan is to incentivize recruitment and retention efforts, and one of the strategies identified is to compensate educators competitively. The plan also states, “Throughout the state, compensation consistently ranked as one of the most significant factors affecting stakeholders’ ability to attract and retain well-qualified teachers...Raising salaries of Early Childhood Educators (birth - 5, public pre-k partnerships), as well as Adult Education teachers would strengthen the educator workforce” serving Maine learners of all ages. The Maine Education Policy Research Institute Report on [Educator Recruitment and Retention](#) also cites competitive compensation as a recruitment and retention policy implication.

In conclusion, providing teachers with competitive compensation is essential to improve educational outcomes and promote economic stability for workers, families, and communities. Increasing the minimum teacher salary is a concrete investment we can make in our workforce as we continue to work together to address the teacher shortage crisis. Based on expert recommendations and evidence, it is essential to remain competitive in teacher salaries to create a sustainable approach to teacher recruitment and retention and is one long-term strategy in making the profession more appealing to our professionals in Maine.

I encourage you to support LD #1064 and help ensure Maine attracts and retains a diverse, talented, and stable educator workforce. I am available to provide any additional information as needed.

Thank you for your time, for the opportunity to testify, and for considering this in your deliberations.

Kaitlin Young

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