

LD 2214

Many of my colleagues and I would say what we do is a calling not just a profession. Our students know it too, they can tell when someone is truly happy to see them, wants them to feel safe and expects them to contribute to the community they are a part of.

Our incredible educators , who go into our schools and put their intellects and hearts on the line every day to make sure our state and country's future are going to be defined by young people with a grounding in not just academic subjects, but a pride of self, and a sense of purpose. To do this work is both an honor and a challenge every day.

I want nothing more than to know that every student is getting the best experience possible from the most focused and well supported staff out there but we as a profession are facing some very real obstacles. You can be a part in helping to minimize some of that burden.

Since 2010 enrollment in Maine's teacher preparation programs is down 53%, a number that boggles my mind. When I graduated UMF in 2001, I graduated with friends still in the profession today.

We did not really understand all the challenges we would face and all the problems society would look to schools to fix, but we believed we could make a difference. I still do. Here is where you come in because you can help us make that difference. I implore you to add bills , LD 1064 and LD 974 to the current state budget.

By adding these bills you are saying you understand and value our work every day and know we should be compensated fairly and evenly across the state for what we bring to the table.

We enter our buildings knowing that we risk not coming home to our own families due to gun violence, we enter knowing we will see the result of food insecurity and housing instability in many of our students. We enter knowing that our kindness and patience may be the most consistent good things our students can experience.

This level of quality needs to be rewarded with pay that allows our teachers and Ed Tech to feed their families with just one job., not worry about basic needs and not struggle with anxiety about bills.

When our schools lack the personnel needed students lose access to things like a chance at outside job training, someone to help with one on one responsibilities like toileting and eating. They also lose continuity of care and we are at risk when students' IEPs are not met, parents can sue our schools for failure to meet these binding agreements. I have seen truly gifted Ed techs permanently change the course of a student's life for the better and I am proud to say my mother was a Ed Tech in the Portland Public Schools special education classrooms before I became a dedicated member of the same system. Ed techs provide critical services and yet some would make more in other fields. We can change that and show them how much we value their critical contributions.

We need to know you understand the risks we take to help our state move forward and see financial commitments from you to make our profession

one that our best and brightest will want to commit to. This will ensure we all move us all forward together for many years to come. Thanks so much for your time and consideration.