

Taryn Southard
Yarmouth, Maine
LD 34

February 24, 2025

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to you about LD 34 - Increase the Minimum Salary for Teachers. I have been a teacher in Maine for 10 years. I have been a second grade teacher for seven years and this is my third year as an instructional coach. As a coach part of my responsibility is to work with new teachers to both the district and the profession. I train teachers in our curriculum, work closely with them on behavior management strategies, and develop their instructional strategies. Over the past ten years I have seen a huge decline in the number of qualified candidates applying for open positions. This past year my school hired someone to teach fourth grade who had never worked in a school because he was the only candidate who applied for the position. He had his conditional certification but had not gone to school for teaching or completed any student teaching. While I am grateful that we found someone for that position, the reality is that the year was very difficult for both him and his students because he was learning the entire profession alongside them.

I am seeing this lack of training more and more. When I was hired as a teacher in Maine it was a very intense process that involved several in-person interviews and a performance task where I was observed teaching a class of students. Today my school is excited when we have more than two highly qualified candidates. I attribute this shrinking pool to the fact that the teaching profession is not appealing for many reasons, including salary. If we want to continue to have highly qualified teachers we must pay them more. We must pay a liveable salary. We must pay people for the expertise they bring to the profession.

Please vote to approve LD 34.

Best,
T. Southard