

Testimony in Support of LD 34: An Act to Increase the Minimum Salary for Teachers

Patti Forster, Knox County Resident, Washington, Maine and Public School Teacher

February 25, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I have dedicated the past thirty-two years as a public school teacher with the past twelve teaching English at Camden Hills Regional High School. I also serve as the president of the Maine Council for English Language Arts and am a National Board Certified Teacher. Over the course of my career, I have been honored to receive several distinctions, including the 2020 Claudette & John Brassil Distinguished Educator Award, the 2021 Knox County Teacher of the Year, and recognition as a semifinalist for the 2022 Maine State Teacher of the Year. Today, I come before you to express my wholehearted support for LD 34: An Act to Increase the Minimum Salary for Teachers.

Maine's educators play a vital role in shaping the future of our state. Every day, teachers across Maine dedicate themselves to fostering critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning in our students. Despite this, many of my colleagues—especially early-career educators—struggle to make ends meet. I remember the first twenty years of my career having to work summers and after school to support my family. The current minimum salary for teachers in Maine does not reflect the level of expertise, responsibility, and commitment required to educate our students effectively.

I have seen firsthand the toll that financial insecurity takes on my colleagues. Too many educators work multiple jobs to support their families, taking time and energy away from their classrooms. Others leave the profession altogether in search of higher-paying opportunities elsewhere. When we fail to provide a livable wage for our teachers, we fail to prioritize the education of our children.

Raising the minimum salary for teachers is not just a matter of fairness; it is a strategic investment in the quality of education our students receive. Low starting salaries discourage talented individuals from entering or remaining in the profession, exacerbating the teacher shortage that is already impacting districts across the state. We are at a critical juncture where we must choose to value our educators as the professionals they are, ensuring that we attract and retain the best teachers for our students.

By passing LD 34, Maine has the opportunity to demonstrate that we respect and support our educators. We can no longer afford to ask teachers to make financial sacrifices to pursue their calling. If we want to build strong schools, vibrant communities, and a prosperous future for Maine, we must start by ensuring that every teacher earns a salary that reflects the importance of their work.

I urge you to support LD 34 and take this necessary step toward strengthening education in Maine. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,


Patti Forster