

Ashley Cirone
Harrington
LD 34

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

I am writing today to express my full support for increasing the minimum salary for teachers in Maine.

Teachers are the backbone of our society, shaping the minds and futures of young people who will one day contribute to the workforce, our communities, and our state. They are tasked with more than just imparting academic knowledge—they serve as mentors, counselors, and role models for their students. They go above and beyond every day, often spending countless hours outside of the classroom, preparing lesson plans, grading assignments, attending professional development, and investing in the success of their students.

We must ensure that those who dedicate their lives to educating the next generation are compensated in a way that reflects their commitment, expertise, and the challenges they face in the classroom.

However, despite the immense responsibility placed on teachers, the base pay in Maine has not kept pace with the rising cost of living or the ever-growing demands of the profession. Many teachers in Maine struggle to make ends meet, and the gap between the salaries of educators and the cost of living is widening. This puts an undue burden on teachers and makes it harder for the state to attract and retain top talent in the profession. The result is a shortage of qualified teachers, especially in rural areas and certain specialized fields, which ultimately affects the quality of education for our children.

Increasing the base pay for teachers in Maine is not just a matter of fairness—it is an investment in the future of our state. Higher pay will help attract and retain the best educators, reduce turnover, and ensure that our students receive a high-quality education. Teachers who feel valued and supported are more likely to remain in the profession, dedicate themselves to their students, and contribute to the broader community.

Furthermore, when we invest in education, we invest in the future success of Maine's economy. High-quality education leads to a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce, which is essential for attracting businesses and fostering innovation. Supporting our teachers is one of the most effective ways we can ensure Maine's long-term prosperity.

In conclusion, I urge you to prioritize increasing the minimum salary for teachers in Maine. By doing so, we send a clear message that we value the hard work and dedication of our educators and are committed to providing them with the compensation they deserve. Our teachers are essential to our state's future, and it is time that we recognize and reward their contributions accordingly.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Ashley Cirone
Harrington Elementary School
2024 Washington County Teacher of the Year