

February 26, 2025

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education,

My name is Miranda Engstrom, and I have been a proud Maine educator for 17 years. Every day, I have the privilege of working with students who dream big, think critically, and strive to make a difference in their communities. I also have the honor of working alongside dedicated, passionate educators who pour their hearts into this profession—not for wealth or recognition, but because they believe in the power of education to change lives.

But belief alone cannot sustain a workforce. Passion does not pay the bills. And dedication should not come at the expense of a livable wage. The reality is that too many educators in Maine struggle to make ends meet, forcing them to take on second and even third jobs just to stay in the profession they love. I know this firsthand—despite holding a Master’s degree plus additional credits, I still work another job to support myself **and the things my students need to make learning come to life**. I am not alone. Across Maine, educators are stretched thin, juggling multiple roles just to afford housing, groceries, and basic necessities, while also ensuring that their students have the resources they need to thrive.

The cost of living continues to rise, yet teacher salaries have not kept pace, leading to a growing crisis in recruitment and retention. Check out Educate Maine’s recent Workforce Report for the data to support this statement! When we fail to compensate educators fairly, we lose them—not just to other states, but to other professions entirely. And when we lose teachers, we lose something far greater: stability for our students, experienced mentors for our young educators, and the very foundation of a strong public education system.

Raising the minimum teacher salary is not just an investment in educators—it is an investment in Maine’s future. It sends a clear message that we value the professionals who shape the next generation, and that we recognize the immense responsibility they carry every single day.

I urge you to take action and raise the minimum teacher salary across Maine. Let’s not wait until more classrooms sit empty, more students lose beloved teachers, and more communities struggle to fill vacancies. Let’s choose, instead, to recruit, retain, and celebrate the workforce we already have by treating them with the respect and compensation they deserve.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to the students and educators of Maine.

Sincerely,



Miranda Engstrom
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2023 Hancock County Teacher of the Year