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In order to recruit and retain people to serve as teachers in our public education system, we need to pay them well. Our state lags behind other states in regard to a reasonable base pay for people starting out in the teaching profession. I commend the work of the folks who have crafted this bill for a statewide initial teaching salary and the proposed incremental pay raises. The quality of education of Maine depends on the quality of the teaching candidates entering the teaching ranks and the professional development and support they receive once hired. Providing a higher standard for the beginning wage across our state is a long awaited and necessary step in our system's improvement.