

Jaylene Roths  
BAR HARBOR  
LD 696

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Bar Harbor, Maine  
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Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Jaylene Roths, and I am a resident of Bar Harbor. I am here today in support of LD 696.

As a former ed tech who faced significant financial barriers to completing student teaching, I understand firsthand the challenges that aspiring educators encounter. I waited many years to become a classroom teacher simply because I could not afford to take the unpaid time off required for student teaching. Now, as a mentor teacher, I have the privilege of guiding a talented ed tech who is in the same position I once was. Without a stipend, she would be unable to complete her student teaching, despite already proving herself as a future asset to our school district.

The urgency of this bill cannot be overstated. Across Maine, teacher vacancies are rising while the number of qualified applicants is declining. Many schools are relying on teachers with emergency certifications, and some, like a school in my district last year, have been unable to hire qualified educators at all. In that case, students had to rely on online learning for science instruction due to a lack of available teachers. This should not be happening when there are dedicated individuals eager to enter the profession but unable to afford the financial burden of student teaching.

If LD 696 is passed, it will make a profound difference for aspiring teachers and the schools that desperately need them. Providing stipends for student teachers will remove financial barriers, allowing talented individuals to enter the profession without unnecessary delay. It will also support mentor teachers like myself, who dedicate time outside of contracted hours to guide our mentees. The stipend allows my mentee, who works as an ed tech when she is not in my classroom, and I to meet for planning and feedback, ensuring a stronger and more prepared future educator. Maine cannot afford to wait. Investing in aspiring teachers now means investing in the future of our students, our schools, and our communities. I urge you to support LD 696 and ensure that financial barriers do not stand in the way of passionate and qualified educators entering the classroom.

Thank you for your time and consideration.