

**Testimony from the University of Maine System, Presented by University of  
Southern Maine Professor of Teacher Education and Maine Teacher Residency Director  
Flynn Ross, Ed.D  
In Support of LD 696, *An Act to Bolster the Maine Teacher Residency* - March 11, 2025**

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs:

My name is Flynn Ross and I am Professor of Teacher Education at the University of Southern Maine (USM), where I also direct the Maine Teacher Residency. On behalf of USM and the University of Maine System (UMS), I am speaking today in the strongest support of LD 696, *An Act to Bolster the Maine Teacher Residency*.

As this Committee is well aware, Maine has a severe educator workforce shortage. This crisis has contributed to high teacher burnout and turnover and PK-12 classrooms statewide being led by under and unprepared teachers or substitutes, resulting in a lack of continuity for Maine students and negatively impacting their learning and outcomes.

Maine's public universities are the largest producer of classroom-ready teachers, having awarded nearly 4,300 education degrees and certifications in the past five years. The Maine Teacher Residency is one way in which we are collaborating and innovating to do even more to meet the needs of our state's PK-12 students and schools.

**Led by USM and inclusive of eight public and private educator preparation programs in the state, in just three years, the Maine Teacher Residency has supported more than 100 new teachers across 34 school districts** with mentoring, advising, and completing their teacher education and certification. This work was initially funded by FY22 Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) secured by U.S. Sens. Susan Collins and Angus King. An additional \$200,000 State appropriation from the 131st Legislature that was the result of a bill sponsored by Sen. Teresa Pierce and supported by this Committee will help fund the program through FY26 and we expect to support an additional 20 residents in the 2025-2026 school year.

The Maine Teacher Residency supports residents with advising, mentoring, and job placement. Some districts have funded co-teaching residency positions that provide two adults in high needs classrooms. Many districts utilize existing funding for positions as ed techs, conditionally or emergency certified teachers that the project supports to help residents become fully certified teachers.

Residents receive a \$3,500 annual stipend toward their costs of postsecondary educator preparation programs, whether at a UMS university or another public or private institution. USM and other participating institutions have redesigned our courses to be accessible to our working residents, including online and after school. Importantly, residents are matched with experienced educators who serve as their mentors. Mentors in-turn are supported through cohort-based monthly workshops, which allows them to connect with each other across districts to share best

practices, problem solve, and reinvigorate their passions for teaching. Mentor teachers earn a \$3,000 stipend to partially compensate them for their invaluable contributions.

In the first two years of the Maine Teacher Residency, 79% of the residents completed their State certification and became employed, which may be higher as it was assumed that those who didn't respond were not employed. 94% of first-year residents were retained in year two.

Nationally, there are more than 200 residency programs. Research on those that have been operating for over 20 years consistently show that graduates of these models continue to teach longer at much higher rates than other teacher preparation programs and that they serve much more racially and economically diverse candidates.

The Maine Teacher Residency model has been informed by that research, and adapted based on best practices, the needs of Maine, and input from an advisory group of representatives, including from the field and statewide associations.

**With every \$100,000 in additional State appropriations, we could ensure students in 10 more Maine classrooms have access to a highly effective teacher who will support them in realizing their full potential.**

As the Maine DOE's own #TeachMaine plan notes, "The single most important factor in quality education is quality teachers...Teacher residency models are high-impact...models to address immediate critical shortages, and should be utilized in Maine."

We are grateful to Sen. Pierce and the bipartisan co-sponsors of LD 696 and urge your continued support of this proven program, and the University of Maine System. Thank you and I welcome your questions.