



Testimony by Jason Judd, Executive Director, Educate Maine

**In Support of LD 696, An Act to Bolster the Maine Teacher Residency Program**

Tuesday, March 11, 2025, 1:00 P.M.

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Jason Judd, the Executive Director of Educate Maine. Our organization is a business-led nonprofit focused on increasing education attainment for Maine people to meet the demands of our economy.

I am writing to express my support for LD 696, An Act to Bolster the Maine Teacher Residency Program. This legislation is essential to address Maine's persistent teacher shortage and ensure that every student has access to high-quality educators. As you know Educate Maine developed the Teach Maine Center in collaboration with the Maine Department of Education to grow and support Maine's educator workforce. We traveled to all 16 counties to learn from educators about the challenges they face and what they need to sustain and grow their profession. What we heard is that Maine educators want to develop and promote a variety of pathways into the teaching workforce. They want to attract more Ed techs, substitute teachers, parents, youth development professionals, Veterans, and career changers into the field. The Maine Teacher Residency program includes many of these groups and is one important solution to Maine's educator shortage.

Maine should be so proud of the early efforts of the Maine Teacher Residency Program. Led by USM and including eight teacher pre-service programs in Maine, this program has championed more than 100 new teachers in dozens of districts across Maine. Throughout the country, graduates of residency programs are much more likely to stay in the field than graduates from other models. In Maine, USM and its partners have compelling retention, certification, and placement rates. Educate Maine has been proud to serve on the advisory committee for the Maine Teacher Residency Program with a committed group of volunteers who support this model and see the difference it is making in Maine communities. We need to invest in this model and support our higher education partners to continue to meet the workforce needs of our school districts.

Our board of directors includes more than a dozen Maine business leaders who understand the importance of having great schools to attract people to live and work in our communities. They understand the importance of the teaching workforce to make sure our local schools thrive. This bill will help sustain a successful model to grow Maine's teacher workforce. On behalf of our board of directors, I urge you to support this bill and take meaningful action to address Maine's teacher shortage and support our local communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.