



Testimony by Jason Judd, Executive Director, Educate Maine

In Support of LD 470, An Act to Require School Administrative Units Adopt Mentoring Programs for Teachers and to Improve Existing Programs

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 470, An Act to Require School Administrative Units Adopt Mentoring Programs for Teachers and to Improve Existing Programs. This legislation is essential to improve retention rates of educators and make sure they are supported while beginning their teaching experiences. 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 see mentoring as a central strategy to improve teacher retention rates and provide necessary support to novice teachers. We also heard that many districts do not have robust mentoring programs, but there is incredible enthusiasm to improve these systems in collaboration with the Maine Department of Education.

This bill will provide needed resources to help districts implement high quality mentoring programs. In addition, this bill will help maintain some consistency between districts in their peer support and teacher mentoring programs. Numerous national studies have found that if new teachers are able to have high quality peer support and mentoring, they will be more likely to stay in the profession. We heard from a variety of Maine educators about how much peer support and teacher mentoring programs impacted their experiences as novice teachers. They expressed a need for robust, organized, consistent, meaningful, and tailored mentoring supports where mentors are paid, have release time, and have appropriate training to support novice teachers. This bill will help address these needs for novice teachers and school districts.

On behalf of our board of directors, I urge you to support this bill and take meaningful action to address Maine's teacher shortage by provided needed support for district mentoring and peer support programs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.