

Melinda Corey
Albion, Maine
LD 1571

Senators Rafferty, Pierce, Libby, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

I am writing today to testify in opposition to LD 1571. As a certified Maine teacher and parent of a charter school student, I have witnessed first hand the benefits students in my community, and my own child, have gained from all the staff at their charter school (not just fully certified staff). The school is a safe haven for children who aren't a great fit in their local public school districts for a variety of reasons. They have incredible opportunities to engage with leaders with deep, rich experiences and expertise, that they might lost out on were those valuable staff members lost due to this proposed regulation.

As a long-certified educational professional through Maine's DOE, I certainly understand the importance of training and teacher preparation. However, I am also well aware of what is nothing short of a crisis in school staffing (in fact, my own local public school district has asked families not to send their children with IEPs to school at times, because they don't have adequate staff to support them). This is not the time to consider tightening restrictions that would reduce staffing even further!

Charter schools operate differently than public schools, and do not receive all the same financial benefits and advantages of public school districts. Despite this, they offer quality education, free breakfast and lunch, free transportation, and extracurricular activity access for additional enrichment outside the classroom. Sometimes the unique focus of these programs, like ecology or agriculture, demands access to individuals with heavy experience in those subject areas. Not having a certificate doesn't mean they aren't qualified to share with students their vast knowledge from their fields of expertise. They are part of teams of educators and school staff, many of who are certified, and who all support each other in such positive ways. It would be crushing to see our students lose access to these talented professionals due to a change like this; those roles would not readily be replaced, if at all.

I've had no qualms, nor have any of my friends and fellow community members with children in charter schools, about the quality of the instruction, regardless of certification. If you ask for stories, you'll find students are thriving in these settings, where they often were unable to succeed before (due to bullying, or special needs going unmet, among other reasons).

As Thomas Bertram Lance, Director of the OMB under Jimmy Carter, once famously said: If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and your service to our beautiful state.