

Alex Waters  
Baxter Academy for Technology and Science  
LD 1571

Representative Murphy, Senator Rafferty, and the members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Alex Waters, I'm the Assistant Principal at Baxter Academy of Technology and Science in Portland, and I am here to speak against the proposed legislation (LD1571).

Baxter Academy has the unique privilege of serving students from a wide swath of Southern Maine, with students coming to our Portland campus over the years from places as far away as Kittery, Augusta, Wiscasset, and Jay, as well as from locations as close as a few blocks away. Students come to Baxter from a wide range of backgrounds, and what we strive to do is to not only engage them academically, but to make their educational experience relevant to their current endeavors and to their future college and career goals.

In service of our students (and in service of the goal of relevance to student goals), we bring in speakers who are experts in a wide range of fields and who can share their real-world expertise with our students. At the end of these events, students often crowd around the presenters and ask them questions about their work and their path through life to get to their current situation. While this Speaker Series provides a wonderful opportunity for our students, these speakers are engaging the students on a one-time basis. Classroom teachers, on the other hand, have a chance to impact their students every day of the school year. Here at Baxter, we've had many teachers over the years who have come to us as a second career (including myself), and who are able to bring the expertise of their prior experiences to bear for the benefit of their students. What better way for an aspiring scientist, author, or engineer to learn whether that career path is right for them than by working with a teacher who has already walked that path?

I can understand the reticence of those who support this bill, but I believe this bill is a misguided attempt to equate "alternative" with "inferior." My experience here at Baxter has been that many of our most engaging, most beloved teachers over the years have had non-traditional routes to the classroom. All of this is to say nothing of the ongoing educator shortages that plague many of the hardest-to-fill positions (I refer to the earlier bill today seeking to address a shortage of industrial arts teachers, as well as the second portion of this bill which seeks to remove barriers to certification of education technicians).

Our teachers here at Baxter, and at charters around the state, are doing wonderful work. I urge you to oppose this legislation and to avoid placing even more barriers in the path of aspiring teachers with unique qualifications and alternate pathways to education.

Respectfully,  
Alex Waters, Assistant Principal at Baxter Academy