



Community Regional Charter School

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"Community-Centered, Uncompromisingly Learner Focused"

TESTIMONY for the PUBLIC HEARING on L.D. 1571

An Act To Modify Certification Standards for Full-time Teachers in Public Charter Schools and for Educational Technicians

TO: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

FROM: Skowhegan/Cornville ME

Travis Works, Executive Director, Community Regional Charter School

RE: OPPOSE L.D. 1571 recommendation to keep and expand to all Public Schools of Maine

Dear Representative Rafferty, and Committee Members

My name is Travis Works and I am the Executive Director of Community Regional Charter School.

I am here in opposition to LD1571 with a recommendation to keep the language of the statute but expand to all public schools in Maine. As a superintendent it is my responsibility to make sure we have the most qualified person in front of learners at all times.

I am going to assume that each one of us in the room including those on the committee want to have the most qualified person teaching their own child, a relative, or a constituent.

I want all of us to remove the politics for a moment and ask ourselves, does the current Maine certification rules and regulations guarantee that a person holding a teaching certificate in Maine is the best person to be teaching your child?

Does a teaching certificate guarantee quality? Caliber? Content knowledge? Or the ability to build relationships with learners and families?

In rural Maine the candidate pool is limited and small schools along with larger schools are faced with a need to fill positions.

If there were a vacant teaching position open for months and only 2 candidates submitted applications for a math/science position, which one of the following do you think would be the best for learners?

One candidate is a local engineer with 30 years of experience in their field and they have a successful track record volunteering for a local youth program each summer. They want to give back to their community, make a difference, and share their knowledge with learners in a public school. To see the full alternative route is a barrier and not ideal for someone who is closer to retirement.

The other candidate has had multiple teaching jobs in several school systems staying no more than 2 years in any one location.

Which position would you want to hire to positively impact learners?

As an administrator you know you have to fill this position and the one who is “most qualified” because of certification has a resume and references with flags. Do you let the position go unfilled and let learners miss out on the education they are entitled to and deserve? Or do you put the best candidate in the position?

Community Regional Charter School understands the struggle with finding quality teachers. In the last 2 years, 52% of the resignations of our teaching positions were directly related to corrective action plans or performance related. Each one of those were fully certified teachers in the State of Maine. A teaching certificate issued by the State of Maine doesn't guarantee a person has the necessary qualifications to be successful in front of children. Given the teacher shortage schools are facing across the state, give all public schools the flexibility to find the best candidate.

I do want to stress that in my 12 years of leading Community Regional Charter School that certification has always been a priority and we maintain as close to a 100% rate of the teachers at Community Regional Charter School being fully certified or have conditional certification. We believe in making sure all our staff are in compliance with the intent of the law. We currently have one teacher that had their certification lapse and they are currently in the process of re-applying.

While we have not leveraged the full flexibility of statute, other than while people have lapsed certification, it is flexibility that all public schools should have.

If we truly believe in putting the right person in front of the learners and we believe in multiple pathways, then why would limit full time teaching positions to those that hold a piece of a paper that doesn't guarantee quality, caliber, or ability to positively teach learners?

My recommendation today is that the flexibility that started with Maine Public Charter Schools be extended to all public schools across Maine.

In the Service of Learners,

Travis Works

Executive Director