

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 1327

### AN ACT TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND STUDENT TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES IN MAINE BY COMPENSATING STUDENT TEACHING

April 25, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Steven Bailey, Executive Director of the Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association in support of L.D. 1327.

I am testifying in support of L.D. 1327, a bill that aims to address the critical shortage of student teachers in Maine by providing much-needed financial support for both student teachers and the cooperating teachers who mentor them. This bill is a crucial step in ensuring that Maine's educator preparation programs continue to thrive, and that the state can attract and retain high-quality educators in our schools.

Maine is currently facing a significant teacher shortage, which is compounded by the challenges of recruiting and retaining new teachers. The first few years of teaching are some of the hardest, and aspiring educators need substantial support and mentorship to ensure they can succeed in their new roles. Many student teachers are unable to dedicate the time and effort needed for their placements due to the financial strain of being unpaid or undercompensated during their student teaching. By providing a stipend of \$500 per week for student teachers, along with reimbursement for travel, this bill directly addresses a barrier that often prevents potential educators from pursuing their teaching careers in Maine.

Equally important is the compensation for cooperating teachers, who play a vital role in the development of student teachers. By offering a minimum stipend of \$500 per month for the guidance and support they provide, this bill acknowledges the invaluable work done by these experienced educators and incentivizes their continued involvement in the training of future teachers.

In addition to supporting the student teacher pipeline, this bill will also make Maine's colleges and universities that offer educator preparation programs more attractive to out-of-state students. With this financial support, these institutions will be better positioned to draw students from outside of Maine, who will then be trained in our state's schools. This could be a key strategy for addressing Maine's educator shortage by increasing the pool of qualified teachers who may choose to stay and work in Maine after graduation.

The bill also encourages student teachers to remain in Maine by requiring reimbursement if they take employment out of state or at a private school after graduation. This provision not only protects the state's investment in the preparation of these teachers but also reinforces the goal of keeping skilled educators in Maine's schools.

Finally, compensating student teachers and cooperating teachers is a sound investment in the future of Maine's education system. By fostering a more supportive and sustainable environment for student teachers, we are setting up a pipeline of future educators who are more likely to remain in the state, contributing to the long-term success of our schools.

For these reasons, I strongly support L.D. 1327 and urge the committee to approve it.