



## Maine Education Association

Jesse Hargrove President | Beth French Vice President | Jaye Rich Treasurer  
Rebecca Cole NEA Director | Rachelle Bristol Executive Director

### Testimony

#### In Support of

**LD 2015: *An Act to Require Superintendents of School Administrative Units to Report Data Related to Educator Vacancies***

**Jesse Hargrove, President, Maine Education Association**

**Before The Education and Cultural Affairs committee**

**January 20th, 2026**

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

My name is Jesse Hargrove, I am a high school social studies teacher on leave to serve as Maine Education Association President. The MEA represents nearly 24,000 educators. Our members include teachers and other educators in nearly every public school in the state, full-time faculty and other professional and support staff in both the University of Maine and Community College systems, and thousands of retired educators.

I offer this testimony today on behalf of the MEA in SUPPORT of LD 2015, *An Act to Require Superintendents of School Administrative Units to Report Data Related to Educator Vacancies*.

LD 2015 would provide policy makers, state and local, advocates, and community members the important data necessary to make informed decisions. We know that educator retirements and resignations are outpacing graduates from the State's education preparation programs. 903 educators retired in 2025 – this is the third highest level we have seen in 11 years and is the highest it has been since 2022 when 928 teachers retired.<sup>1</sup> In addition, 460 teachers and 424 Education Technicians left the profession in 2025. These numbers are double the experience from just a decade ago. While this is fewer than past years, the aggregate trend means the state must replace over a thousand educators every year.

This data will help understand the localized impact of these retirements and resignations, especially as student enrollment and district needs flex. The data will also give us state-wide information to inform policy discussions to ensure we have an educational labor force into the future. However, we encourage the committee to consider expanding the data collection effort to include Education Support Professionals – Ed. Techs, Transportation, Nutrition, and Facilities staff are all part of our education universe. We see signs posted outside of schools

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<sup>1</sup> MPERS retirement data includes Administrators, Education Technicians II and III



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looking to hire, yet are without data to know the statewide and local extent of these critical shortages.

Additionally, as districts struggle to replace staff, the remaining are left to fill in gaps. Understanding the extent by which staff are working outside of their certification would also help us better understand the impact of school staff shortages. We hear stories of Ed. Techs IIs with III responsibilities, and classroom teachers picking up courses. We support the revisions to Ch. 115 which include alternative pathways to allow educators to pick up additional certifications, however, without the data, we don't fully understand the realities of this need.

Furthermore, we know that school districts have made the difficult decision to eliminate positions that have been unfilled or received no applications. This information matters. The needs in our districts still exist when these positions are eliminated, however the information is gone. The remaining staff-administrators, classroom educators, and support staff - are left to make do.

In summary, we support efforts to gather and report data regarding school shortages, and recommend that this data include all of our school staff, including support professionals; that the number of educators working outside of certification be reported, and the number of positions eliminated due to unfilled vacancies.

Thank you,

Jesse Hargrove  
President, Maine Education Association