

Jason Curry
South Portland
LD 2212

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and other members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, and
Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Jason Curry and I work at Greely High School as a teacher in the Humanities (you can tell by the elbow patches on my sports jacket) and I live in South Portland. I am here today to testify in support of the Governor's proposed budget. I started my career in education in the last century, and have been part of many teacher hiring committees. We used to see huge stacks of applications for any job opening, and the candidates were all really amazing people, either enthusiastic new college graduates with energy and zeal, or professionals from many different career paths who wanted to contribute to the well being of Maine's future by sparking the imaginations of our youth with goals, hopes and dreams of future success. But the salaries of teachers have failed to keep pace with inflation, not to mention the salaries in other fields of work, and this has recently narrowed down the field of candidates for every open position (and there's a lot of them as our older staff members like me retire) and it's a tragic thing to see.

I'm sure every member of this committee and everyone listening to today's testimony remembers their favorite teacher from their own school years; someone who cared about them and gave them a wealth of information, hope, and careful guidance as you grew into yourself. It may have been an English teacher, Foreign Language or Social Studies teacher, an Art or Music teacher, perhaps a Math or Science, Industrial Arts or Physical Education teacher. Your children and grandchildren need the same inspiration, wisdom, and attention that you received, and it should come from trained professionals making an adequate living wage in properly supported and funded schools.

In closing, I will simply say this: Maine has a tradition of producing a very well educated citizenry, who, upon graduation from high school, are prepared to solve life's challenges in the workplace or attend prestigious universities around the world. That was never an accident of fate; it was because of Maine's public schools and Maine's teachers. We need your help in this legislative session to support the Governor's Education budget to keep succeeding in our mission.