

Nathan Hall
Portland
LD 2212

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and 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 Nathan Hall. I am a sixth-grade science teacher in the Falmouth School District, and I live in Portland. I am here today in support of the Governor's proposed budget.

When I began teaching in 2008 at the Middle School of the Kennebunks, I earned approximately \$36,000 a year despite holding two master's degrees. I worked summer jobs and a second job during the school year just to stay afloat. There were days when I worried about affording gas and tolls for my commute from Portland to Kennebunk. Seventeen years later, the situation for many early-career educators has not meaningfully improved. In Falmouth, many of my colleagues under thirty-five commute more than thirty minutes each way because that is the closest housing they can afford. Many still work second jobs during the school year — time that could otherwise be spent planning lessons, collaborating with colleagues, or simply resting so they can be fully present for their students.

This is not only a compensation issue. It is a community issue, particularly in southern and coastal Maine.

Teachers can and do build meaningful relationships with students regardless of where they live. But when teachers are able to live in or near the communities they serve, something deeper becomes possible.

Living locally allows teachers to:

Build authentic, everyday relationships with families

Understand the community's values, history, and needs

Commit long-term to their schools

For eleven years, I commuted thirty miles to work. I was connected to the school community, but I was never truly part of it. Today, living in Portland and teaching in Falmouth, I regularly see students and families at the grocery store, walking my dog, or at community events (Up the Hearts!). We talk about life — not just school. Those informal interactions build trust. They strengthen relationships. They make it easier to support students when challenges arise.

Research consistently shows that strong relationships between schools and families improve student outcomes. Increasing base teacher pay will not just help educators pay their bills. It will allow more teachers to live in the communities where they teach, reducing turnover, deepening community ties, and strengthening the trust that supports student success.

If we want stable schools, strong relationships, and better outcomes for students, we must ensure teachers can afford to live in the communities they serve.

Increasing base pay is not just an investment in teachers. It is an investment in students and in Maine's communities.