



TESTIMONY BY Jodi Mezzanotte
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To the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee
Tuesday, February 24, 2026, 1:00 p.m.
In support of LD2175

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Honorable Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee: My name is Jodi Mezzanotte, and I am the Director of Educator Engagement at Educate Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to share my strong support for LD 2175 – Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 115: The Credentialing of Education Personnel.

From my seat at Educate Maine—and through the Teach Maine Center—we spend every day listening to districts, educators, and preparation programs about what is happening on the ground. The message is consistent and urgent: Maine is in a workforce crisis, and our current certification system is not keeping pace with the reality schools are facing. Teacher shortages have been identified in 17 endorsement areas, from elementary teachers to math and English, and especially in high-need areas like special education and related services. Schools are doing everything they can to recruit and retain educators, but too often they are losing strong candidates because the path to certification is overly rigid, time-consuming, and expensive in ways that don't always align with demonstrated competency.

LD 2175 will increase the ability of school districts to find great educators for their students by streamlining the certification process for two groups who are essential to addressing shortages:

First, career changers from outside the field. Maine has talented professionals—people with deep content expertise, real-world experience, and a strong desire to serve their communities—who would be incredible educators. LD 2175 allows districts to build individualized certification plans that recognize relevant prior experience while addressing gaps through targeted coursework, mentoring, and classroom support. This is not a shortcut. It is a rigorous pathway grounded in evidence of competency and focused development.

Second, experienced educators changing endorsement areas. We also have strong teachers already in Maine schools who are willing to move into high-need areas. Under current structures, they can be forced into duplicative or irrelevant coursework that doesn't make them better educators—it just creates a barrier. The portfolio pathway in LD 2175 allows districts and candidates to focus learning where it's actually needed, helping teachers transition more efficiently into shortage areas while maintaining high standards.

One of the reasons I support LD 2175 so strongly is that it encourages a shift away from “checkbox compliance” and toward high-quality, targeted professional learning. It enables districts to fine-tune development to the real needs of individual candidates—rather than requiring a one-size-fits-all list of courses. It also creates opportunities for districts to partner with Maine colleges and universities and regional providers, instead of relying on costly, out-of-state online coursework with uneven quality. This approach is a smarter use of limited resources: it can reduce unnecessary tuition costs, minimize recruitment and turnover expenses, and keep professional development dollars circulating within Maine’s education ecosystem.

And I want to be very clear about one point: LD 2175 does not replace traditional teacher preparation. The vast majority of Maine educators will still come through college-based pathways. This bill simply adds a structured, rigorous option for high-quality candidates who might otherwise walk away—candidates we cannot afford to lose if we are serious about ensuring every student has access to a qualified, well-prepared educator.

In short, LD 2175 is a practical solution to a practical problem. It helps Maine grow and stabilize the educator workforce by making certification more responsive, more competency-based, and more supportive—without sacrificing standards. It also directly advances a key recommendation of the Teach Maine Center Focus Report: streamline and remove barriers to teacher certification through targeted policy change and resource allocation. The result is a smarter investment in people: supporting strong candidates already committed to Maine, training and mentoring them well, and increasing the likelihood they will stay.

I respectfully urge you to support LD 2175. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Maine’s students and educators.