

Good Afternoon, I am Trudy Newcomb, Principal at the Edmunds Consolidated School, which is one of the 3 schools managed under the DOE, Education in the Unorganized Territories, also known as the EUT. I am here on my own time to speak about chronic staffing issues and the employee pay gap for Maine's Executive Branch workers that goes unaddressed in LD 2212. I'll speak to how it is impacting hiring and retention of staff within the EUT.

This is my 13th year as a principal in the EUT. During this time, there have been at least 3 changes in principals in the other two EUT schools, and also in the Director position in the Augusta office. I am the most senior person working at the admin level in the EUT. I have witnessed, year after year, the negative impact these turnovers have had on teachers, staff, students, and most importantly on teaching and learning.

The turnover in the Augusta office slows processes that are integral to running our schools. The connections between the EUT, the DOE, and the State of Maine, are not easy to navigate, and to be losing experienced staff to other departments/positions, slows my ability to do even the most basic things that are able to be done easily in other school districts. We desperately need to be able to retain staff in the Augusta office.

I will share an example to illustrate the impact of retention and hiring at my school. We ended last school year fully staffed, for the first time in months. In late August, I learned of staff leaving. I lost a bus driver and a special education teacher to another local district as they paid better. Another new hire could not report in due to a family issue. In October, my custodian left to join the other local district, and then I lost another Ed. Tech III in November due to a move. Most of these employees left to pursue positions with higher pay and better benefits. These gaps are not small. To illustrate- the most significant difference is between teacher pay at my school, and the next town over- which is about \$5,000. I can not overcome the difference in pay and benefits to attract candidates despite our school having a great educational reputation, and staff report that were they loved working at my school.

The fact is that all other districts are also desperate for staff, and their pay and benefits are better than what we can offer. I started the school year faced with 4 vacancies- a bus driver, a grade 1/2 teacher, a grade PK/K teacher, and an ed tech III. I was forced to reassign staff within my school to the 2 teaching positions less than a week before students arrived. We have advertised over and over again this year to fill these positions, and it was only last week that I was able to fill all but the janitor position. I have been since October without a full-time custodian. I have acted as teacher, ed. tech, and custodian regularly to minimize the impact on other staff and students. Other staff pitch in as well to maintain the integrity of programs, but it all negatively impacts morale among staff, the integrity of programs, and increases overall stress throughout the building.

I returned to school today, with all positions finally filled, except the custodian position, for the first time all year. I should be ecstatic, but I know this will not be my reality when more positions open in other area districts in the next few weeks and over the summer. I will once again lose talented, experienced staff to other schools that pay better and offer better benefits unless you support funding to help close the state employee pay gap in this supplemental budget. Also please work to ensure teachers at the EUT are included in the Governor's proposed minimum salary increases for K-12 teachers.

Thank you for allowing me to address you today, and I urge you to support staff working within the EUT and other Executive Branch workers in LD 2212.