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LD 2175: Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 115: The Credentialing of Education Personnel, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Education, State Board of Education (EMERGENCY) - Neither For Nor Against

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and the Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Becki Dodge and I am writing to offer comments neither for nor against LD2175 as it is presented. I am the current president of the Maine Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (MAHPERD); the state's organization that provides advocacy and professional development in support of health and physical educators. We represent a membership of approximately 400 professionals across the state. I am a physical education and adapted physical education teacher in MSAD 51 (Cumberland/North Yarmouth). I hold Maine Department of Education endorsements 510 and 515, as well as certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in Early/Middle Childhood Physical Education.

In alignment with the mission of MAHPERD which is dedicated to supporting quality health education and physical education programs that promote lifelong wellness, it is essential that educator preparation standards remain strong, clear, and comprehensive. We have reviewed Chapter 115, specifically Section 2, as it relates to Endorsements 510, 512, 515, and 520, which are necessary for the qualified teaching of health education, physical education, and adapted physical education.

Physical education and health education play critical roles in supporting students' skills and knowledge that impacts physical, mental and emotional health, cognitive development, and lifelong well-being behaviors. The effectiveness of these programs depends heavily on the preparation and expertise of the educators delivering them. For this reason, I respectfully urge the Committee to preserve comprehensive endorsement requirements in these content areas.

Robust preparation standards, including coursework and practicum experiences, ensure that physical education and health education teachers are trained in areas such as motor learning, health literacy, inclusive and adaptive practices, assessment of student growth, injury prevention, classroom management in active environments or with sensitive content, and evidence-based instructional strategies. These competencies are not incidental; they are central

to providing safe, equitable, and developmentally appropriate instruction across both content areas and education.

Careful consideration should be given to Endorsement 515 as it relates to the preparation of teachers in adapted physical education. Educating students with physical and developmental disabilities, and behavioral challenges require specialized training beyond general coursework. Teachers must understand individualized education plan (IEP) implementation, differentiated instructional strategies, safe equipment modification, behavior management in movement-based settings, and collaboration with special education and related service providers. Physical education environments present unique safety, engagement, and instructional considerations, and properly endorsed educators are essential to ensuring meaningful participation and appropriate progress for students with diverse and complex needs. Certification in adapted physical education is also directly connected to compliance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA requires that students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), including specially designed instruction and related services identified in their IEPs. Physical education is specifically recognized within IDEA as a required component of special education services when appropriate. Properly certified adapted physical education teachers are trained to conduct individualized assessments, develop measurable goals, plan specially designed instruction, and ensure participation in the least restrictive environment. Maintaining strong standards for the adapted physical education endorsement supports districts in meeting federal obligations while ensuring students with disabilities receive meaningful, quality, standards-based physical education services.

Health education specifically plays a central role in implementing and supporting numerous existing statutory requirements as outlined by the [Maine Department of Education](#), including but not limited to §4711 and §4712 related to mental health and reducing stigma at the elementary and middle school levels; §4723 addressing health and physical education, including affirmative consent; §4502 provisions related to suicide awareness education and training and child sexual abuse prevention education and response; §6304 concerning automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR); and §6671 regarding Youth Mental Health First Aid training. These statutes require educators to have specific understanding of the knowledge and skills needed to educate students in mental health literacy, human development, consent education, substance use prevention, safety response, and family life education. Strong endorsement standards help ensure that the professionals responsible for delivering this instruction are appropriately trained to meet the intent of the laws.

As the Committee considers the structure of endorsements, attention should also be given to Endorsement 512, the dual certification in health education and physical education. While dual certification may offer staffing flexibility, it is important to ensure that preparation requirements are sufficiently comprehensive to support depth of knowledge and pedagogical skill in both distinct content areas. The requirements, as they are currently written, fall significantly below those necessary for stand-alone endorsements and may not provide sufficient depth of preparation to ensure high-quality instruction in each distinct content area. Health education and physical education each encompass substantial bodies of content, instructional methodology, and statutory responsibilities. Without robust and clearly defined preparation standards for both

disciplines, there is a risk that educators may not receive the full training necessary to deliver high-quality, standards-based curriculum in each area. Careful review of Endorsement 512 requirements can help ensure that dual certification maintains the same rigor and professional expectations as stand-alone endorsements.

Maintaining clear and rigorous standards for these endorsements supports consistency across districts, promotes public confidence, and reinforces that not only physical education and health education, but all academic disciplines and services, be delivered by licensed professionals with specialized training. Thank you for your service and for considering this perspective as you deliberate on the proposed revisions.