

The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
Testimony from Kaitlin Young, 2018 Maine Teacher of the Year

**In Support of**  
L.D. 1018  
March 22, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Kaitlin Young, I am a resident of Stetson, and the 2017 Piscataquis County Teacher of the Year and the 2018 Maine Teacher of the Year.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD #1018 An Act To Increase the Membership of the State Board of Education and Review the Board's Responsibilities, Functions and Staffing

During my tenure as Maine Teacher of the Year, I had the privilege of interacting with policymakers who expressed a sincere appreciation for teacher input and expertise. Unfortunately, many of our teachers who diligently serve in our schools do not share the same experience and often feel that their professional insight is undervalued. According to the Center for Education Policy's Listen to Us: Teacher Views and Voices, 94% of teachers believe that their opinions are not considered in state educational policymaking, and nearly half of the teachers say that state or district policies often create obstacles in their work. We must incorporate teacher voice at all levels of educational policymaking in order to ensure that future policies are creating opportunities and pathways instead of obstacles for teachers and students.

The Maine Teacher and County Teacher of the Year program is an option for finding teachers to serve on the State Board. These educators are desirable for such a role because they participate in a rigorous and reflective selection process that includes the perspectives of business leaders, community members, administrators, and fellow teachers. These teachers receive professional learning experiences that develop their leadership, advocacy, and policy skills, preparing them to offer valuable perspectives and contributions to the State Board. As ambassadors for their schools, counties, and the teaching profession, they are connected to a growing network of teacher leaders

through the Maine County and State Teachers of the Year Association and can draw upon their collective expertise to inform their work, benefitting Maine's policymakers.

In 2007, the State Board of Education added two student representatives, which provided critical insights into the needs and wants of Maine learners and future leaders. Having recently attended several State Board meetings in support of fellow County and State Teachers of the Year, I can attest to the incredible insight and perspective that Joshua T. Lewinand and Ryan Hafener bring to these conversations.

Teachers possess invaluable knowledge of our students, teaching best practices, and collaboration and advocacy skills that are crucial in designing, deciding, and implementing effective educational policies that align with their intended outcomes. As Maine continues to address the educator workforce shortage, appointing a dedicated teacher representative to the State Board of Education presents an excellent opportunity to demonstrate to teachers that their experience and expertise are not merely considered in state policy decisions, but are genuinely valued and viewed as an essential component of ongoing efforts to elevate teacher voice and promote policies and practices that lead to positive outcomes for teachers and Maine learners.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of LD 1018 and consider the various options available to ensure that a practicing teacher serves on the State Board. I am available to provide any additional information as needed.

Thank you for your time, for the opportunity to testify, and for considering this in your deliberations.

Kaitlin Young

2017 Piscataquis County Teacher of the Year

2018 Maine Teacher of the Year

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