

EDUCATE MAINE



The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Dolly Sullivan, Program Director, Educate Maine

In Support of

L.D. 1018

March 22, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Dolly Sullivan, I am a Program Director at Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization. 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

Educate Maine's mission is to ensure that all Maine people reach their highest educational potential. We administer the Maine Teacher of the Year program in partnership with the Maine Department of Education and the State Board of Education. Our work focuses on elevating the "voice of teachers for the benefit of the profession" (Quaglia and Lande, 2015) and showcasing the profession as one that people want to pursue.

For several years, we have been advocating for a teacher to serve on the Maine State Board of Education. We believe this is an important way to acknowledge the expertise of teachers when deciding and implementing education policy.

As the State Coordinator for the Teacher of the Year program, I'm privileged to work with some of Maine's most remarkable teachers. The County and State Teachers of the Year engage in a rigorous selection process that is designed as a professional leadership experience. It is important to note, that when we name the Teachers of the Year, county and state, we do not presume that they are the 'best teacher in Maine'. We know that would be impossible. Rather, they are passionate teachers who take on added roles and responsibilities necessary to be ambassadors for their students and profession, engaging with business, education and policy leaders, and working with practicing and pre-service teachers. We believe their Teacher of the Year experience, coupled with their lived classroom experience, would be a tremendous resource to the State Board.

There is research that highlights the importance of having teachers at the table when discussing and deciding education policy that will be referenced in other testimony. There is a book called "Teachers at the Table: Voice Agency and Advocacy in Education Policy Making" by Annalee Goode that is based on the simple premise that ***policy matters in education and teachers matter to policy***. Moreover, the goal of having teachers as policy leaders leads to producing better educational policy that is more relevant and responsive to the youth, educators, families, and communities it serves.

While Educate Maine supports this bill, we also support expanding the field to include County Teachers of the Year who are practicing teachers in addition to State Teachers of the Year. We will announce the 10th cohort of County TOYs in May - providing access to nearly 160 teachers from across the state who are leaders in the profession and continue to do amazing things for students. Additionally, going back to the 1990's, twenty of the State Teachers of the Year are still practicing educators.

We urge you to vote yes on LD 1018 and consider the options available to ensure that a practicing teacher serves on the State Board. Included in the written testimony is a chart that shows other state policies for teacher appointment and terms on their state boards of education. We are available to provide information as needed.

Thank you for your time.

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| State | Notes | Anecdotal |
|----------------|---|---|
| Delaware | Former TOY (must be an active teacher) is nominated by the governor and is a [REDACTED] member | |
| Nevada | Teacher is appointed by the governor and is a voting member. There is a web form for people to apply for board seats and governor selects from the applications | |
| Georgia | Governor announced that he wants a current TOY to serve an [REDACTED] role on the State Board of Education | |
| Wyoming | In Wyoming, there must be a teacher represented and they are a full voting member. They serve 6-year terms. Our 2017 WTOY just came off the board after serving as chair. | |
| Arkansas | TOY serves as a [REDACTED] member during their year of service (July 1-June 30). | From a TOY- "it was an AMAZING experience. One of my favorite parts of being a TOY. We also attended all state board trainings or work sessions where they learned about upcoming policy. We served on a state board committee too. I was on the family engagement committee and the school improvement committee." |
| North Carolina | Current and previous year TOY serve as advisors for the State Board of Education. Each TOY serves 2 years. They [REDACTED] but can participate otherwise | |