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TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 1064

AN ACT TO INCREASE THE MINIMUM TEACHER SALARY

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Steven Bailey, executive director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association, in opposition to L.D. 1064.

MSSA and MSBA are both in support of seeing salaries for teachers increase. Both Associations provided supportive testimony for the last bill that helped raise the minimum salary of all teachers in Maine to \$40,000. It is true that increases in salary will help recruit and retain quality professionals to provide the quality learning for our students in our classrooms across the state. School districts who were in need of still getting to this \$40,000 minimum are in the third year of the ramp up to this minimum figure. While some districts were already beyond this figure within their collective bargaining agreements, there were many that were not, even with the state funds to help support this increase within districts. Raising the minimum also had the impact of increasing other salaries higher up in salary schedules as these collective bargaining agreements have been renegotiated. This has had the impact of raising the entire budget in these school districts.

The design of this bill is well constructed; yet, given the fact that while most districts have recovered from the most recent increases, except for pockets of districts here and there, MSSA and MSBA are opposed to seeing L.D. 1064 move forward at this time.

We know that increased teacher salaries can have a positive impact to attract and retain qualified teachers within our schools. Providing this financial support to highlight teaching within Maine's Public Schools as THE job to seek would be a benefit of this type of increase. Our Associations recognize this and would like to see these increases be viable. We also know there have been bills proposed to increase the minimum wage of the educational support professionals within schools. The Associations see problems with all of these bills moving forward.

MSSA and MSBA need to better understand the funding stream for all of the recommended increases in salaries. We understand the level of support that will be provided to reach the minimum salary but what level of state support will be provided as contracts are renegotiated to reflect and change in the rest of collective bargaining agreements?

With proposed budgets still tight, and many districts still working to provide additional supports for students with socio and emotional needs related to learning during Covid-19, and for those students who still need additional assistance to accelerate learning due to difficulties experienced during the pandemic, many districts

are expecting a funding cliff that potentially will impact them for the immediate future. Districts are struggling with budgets right now due to the increase in valuation, where many towns are required to pay more towards education, combined with the decrease in economically disadvantaged subsidy. 75-80% of school budgets are made up of salaries and benefits. If the increases in salaries fall on the taxpayers, we worry that budgets will not pass and that will have a negative impact on the services we need to provide to our students.

The timing is just not right, according to the two Associations, to support this bill right now. MSSA and MSBA recommend that L.D. 1064 ought not to pass.