

Liam Anderson
Orono
LD 1064

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, My name is Liam Anderson and I am a junior Early Childhood Education Student at the University of Maine in Orono, and I am here to testify in support of LD 1064: An Act to Increase the Minimum Teacher Salary.

I am here to make a difference. That is something I have believed in myself since I developed critical thinking skills at the age of 6. I want to put myself in a position where I have the opportunity to positively impact as many lives as I can. For me, that means becoming a teacher. I am making a commitment to public service; using my knowledge and skills to facilitate the learning and development of our next generation of difference-makers. For the thousands of educators in the state of Maine, and for the aspiring educators seeking out the opportunity to positively impact their community with their passion for the profession, the current teacher salary scale is the most restrictive obstacle towards achieving such opportunity.

Receiving a university degree is viewed as an investment. Investing valuable time and thousands of dollars into a quality education in the present, to propel yourself forward for success in a professional career. But with the current state of education, the reality is that calling it an investment would be flawed. The reality is that it is a sacrifice. I made a conscious decision before I chose education to make the sacrifice to become a teacher. There are so many making such sacrifices with me, as they prepare to act on their calling and become educators. Overcoming the anxieties of the student debt that awaits me as I try to put food on the table or pay rent at a \$40,000 a year salary. Wondering how I am going to scrounge up the money to fill up my tank of gas, so they can drive to their unpaid student teaching experience, 5 days a week, 40 hours a week, for 4 months. Some argue this as a choice I made. To that, I say I chose to be in a classroom day in and day out to support a child's development and hardships. I choose to be a consistent smiling face for a child without a home. I choose to provide additional support for a child with a developmental disability. These hardships I face are an accepted reality of doing what I know I should.

But in a teacher shortage crisis, these continued sacrifices educators make grow closer and closer to a point of being unjustifiable. Everyday, teachers begin to assess their own needs as individuals. New graduates are making the evaluation that the average teacher salary in Maine is the lowest in the Northeast, and as the nation tries to climb their way out of a teacher shortage, the solution to the problem won't be looking here nearly as much. As a member of the solution, the next generation of educators, I urge you to see that the College of Education and Human Development's enrollment numbers have continues to decline further each year I urge you to look at the districts pleading for support from any source possible, the need for trained professionals in our schools continues to snowball in the wrong direction.

At 20 years old, I have chosen to dedicate my life to teaching. Becoming the best educator I can be so our children can thrive in a better community they are learning to be a part

of. But I am here today to tell you I cannot do that if I can't support myself. We can't do that if we can't afford to take care of our most basic essentials. The thousands of educators I stand here representing today can not do that without this bill, raising the minimum teacher salary to \$50,000 in the state of Maine.

I am here today to hopefully emphasize the reality that education needs help. I am here today to tell you that teachers need an economically viable and appreciated profession so they can do what they do best. I am here to make a difference.

Thank you.