

**Testimony of Simon West for The Maine State Chamber of Commerce  
Neither for Nor Against  
L.D. 1064 An Act to Increase the Minimum Teacher Salary**

Chairs Rafferty and Brennan, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Simon West. I reside in Gardiner and I represent the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, a statewide business association made up of both large and small businesses, here to provide you with my testimony in support of LD 1064.

The Maine State Chamber and its members have previously supported legislation to increase teacher pay and we are here to do so again. We would like to reflect on the reasons we have supported legislation like this in the past. Sensible wage increases lead to a greater supply of teachers, lowers turnover rates, keeps top education graduates in the teaching field, reduces the need for teachers to supplement their income with second jobs, and has been shown to improve student performance. Maine needs to ensure that there is an adequate supply of quality teachers for our students and this legislation is a useful tool to get us there.

While you consider this piece of legislation, and I hope support it, I want to address another cohort of education that is battling a workforce shortage. Our early educators are also in need of wage increases. Maine employers and families are struggling with a lack of access to childcare and early childhood education. Under this legislation early childhood educators with a BA would be paid 30% less than their PreK-12 colleagues with equivalent educational attainment. While we do support this legislation, and would like to see it passed, I wish to point out that this would increase the pay gap we are working to close. This pay gap is causing educators to leap from childcare programs to PreK and through second grade. This leap is intensifying the shortages of childcare and early childhood education programs that our economy desperately needs filled.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our testimony.