

State of Maine
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Testimony of Paula Gravelle, Director of School Finance

In Support of: L.D. 1064

An Act to Increase the Minimum Teacher Salary

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Sponsored by: Senator Pierce

Co-Sponsored by: Senators Ingwersen and Rotundo, Representatives Brennan, Dodge, Gattine, Kuhn, R. Millett, Murphy and Sargent

Date: April 6, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Paula Gravelle and I am here representing the Department of Education speaking in support of LD 1064, An Act to Increase the Minimum Teacher Salary. Our support of LD 1064 is conditional upon the removal of the stipulation that beginning in 2028, increases to the minimum teacher salary will be tied to the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). We understand, based on discussions with the sponsor, that this is a possibility. Additionally, we must keep in mind the availability of State funds that may change from year to year and minimizing and any impact those fluctuations may have on local SAU budgets.

In 2019, the Mills Administration, with the help of the legislature, increased the minimum teacher salary to \$40,000. While we believe this was an important step toward fairly compensating our teachers, the Department of Education and the Mills Administration agree that the \$40,000 minimum teacher salary remains too low and should be increased to \$50,000. The increases by year outlined in LD 1064 allow for school administrative units (SAUs) to benefit from State support as they work towards meeting a new \$50,000 minimum. This method worked well for introducing the \$40,000 minimum in 2019 and this is a good model for increasing the minimum again for the \$50,000 minimum. Currently, only 4.22% of SAUs have their minimum salary for the equivalent of 1 FTE teacher at or above \$50,000. The estimated total cost for Maine to increase the minimum teacher salary to \$50,000 is approximately \$28.6 million.

The estimated phase-in costs over a 4-year period are as follows:

- FY 25 to bring all Teachers up to \$42,500 = \$4,087,823
- FY 26 to bring all Teachers up to \$45,000 = \$5,780,838
- FY 27 to bring all Teachers up to \$47,500 = \$8,566,189
- FY 28 to bring all Teachers up to \$50,000 = \$11,061,117

These estimates do not account for typical annual salary increases. If it were, these figures would be lower, but the DOE cannot reasonably calculate those amounts. For these reasons, the Department of Education is in support of L.D. 1064 with the adjustments noted above. I would be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have, and I will be available for work sessions on this bill.