



Maine Education Association

Grace Leavitt President | Jesse Hargrove Vice President | Beth French Treasurer
Rebecca Cole NEA Director | Rachelle Bristol Executive Director

Testimony

Neither For Nor Against

LD 1217: Resolve, to Create a Pilot Program for Alternative Teacher Certification

Mallory Cook, Director of Training and Early Educator Engagement,

Maine Education Association

Before the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

April 13, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and other esteemed members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Mallory Cook (pronouns she/her/hers), and I am the Director of Training and Early Educator Engagement at the Maine Education Association, and a certified English teacher and Building Administrator. I am here to provide testimony neither for nor against LD 1217: Resolve, to Create a Pilot Program for Alternative Teacher Certification.

This session, the Committee has seen and will continue to see a number of bills that attempt to mitigate the critical educator shortage we are facing. While the MEA believes compensation to be the most favorable solution, we understand there are barriers that exist when entering the profession and are open to exploring alternative pathways, especially those that target underrepresented demographic groups, as called for in this bill. The vision of MEA is a great public school for every Maine student, and we know a key component to achieving this goal involves representation of Maine's rich cultural and linguistic diversity in our workforce. Our students need a culturally affirming environment to thrive. The Learning Policy Institute notes that teachers of color boost the academic performance of students of color, which results in higher graduation rates and increased aspirations to attend college.¹ Furthermore, Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings speaks to the benefits of a diverse teacher workforce in broader terms, noting: "We need White students to have an experience in a classroom with a teacher from a different background or group different from their own so that they can begin to shift some of their thinking about hierarchy and who's capable, who has authority, who has knowledge."²

As we seek to implement solutions to our educator shortage, it is essential we create sustainable options that best prepare candidates to meet the rigors of the job. Failing to do so will create a revolving door – a temporary fix for an on-going issue. For this reason, we believe that it would be appropriate for the

¹ Learning Policy Institute. "How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color." [Diversifying the Teaching Profession: How to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color | Learning Policy Institute](#)

² Partnership for the Future of Learning. "Building a Strong and Diverse Teaching Profession." [Teaching+Profession+Playbook+-+Partnership+for+the+Future+of+Learning+-+050121.pdf](#)



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Department to develop this pilot program for alternative certification and be prepared to present it to the committee for approval by December of 2023. As written, it looks like the program would be implemented immediately, and we fear this would not allow for a robust, long-term, sustainable program to be built, vetted, and revised. Inadequate training and insufficient support are two of the leading reasons new teachers leave the profession; this is especially true for those entering the profession through alternative preparation programs. It is our hope that this alternative program would have ample support to ensure those who participate in the program continue to thrive in the profession for years to come. The models used by teacher residency and apprenticeship programs both in our state and across the country serve as great examples of effective programs; they integrate partnerships with professional educators, require routine observations with feedback, and invest in high quality mentoring practices. These high-impact strategies have proven effective and should be considered in the development of this plan.

Thank you for your time, and I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.