



The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
Testimony from Jason Judd, Executive Director, Educate Maine

**In Support Of**

L.D. 1217: “Resolve, to Create a Pilot Program for Alternative Teacher Certification”

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Jason Judd, the Executive Director of Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization. I am also a resident of Lewiston, one of the many school communities across Maine working diligently to increase teacher recruitment and retention.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of L.D. #1217. Educate Maine's mission is to ensure that Maine people are prepared to succeed in education and career and that all Maine people reach their highest educational potential. As a member of the MaineSpark coalition, we measure this by attainment - the share of adult workers with a postsecondary credential of value in demand by Maine employers. Maine's goal is to reach 60% by 2025. We strongly believe that a well-prepared, diverse, and stable educator workforce is essential in achieving our mission and ensuring that all Maine learners have access to exceptional educators who can equip them with the skills, knowledge, and credentials necessary to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce. Educate Maine partners with a variety of pre-service teaching institutions in Maine to help address teacher recruitment, retention, and leadership development.

A diverse educator workforce is good for Maine learners. As Maine continues to implement its Economic Development Strategy, there is a focus on talent and innovation to “create a diverse and sustainable economy.” A growing body of research has shown that teachers of color positively impact the academic outcomes of all students, both in the short and long term. Studies have found that having just one teacher of color between kindergarten and third grade can increase academic achievement, lead to higher high school graduation rates, and support greater college enrollment rates for students of color (Dee, 2004; Gershenson, 2017). Additionally, recent research has shown that students who learn from diverse educators are better equipped to navigate an increasingly diverse and interconnected world, and are more likely to experience success inside and outside the classroom (Page, 2007; Phillips, 2014). Unfortunately, Maine's educator workforce does not reflect the diversity of our ever-changing student population. This lack of diversity in the educator workforce can adversely affect students from diverse backgrounds and limit their learning opportunities from teachers who share their experiences.



The Teach Maine Plan recognizes the need to diversify the educator workforce and create high-retention pathways into the teaching profession. Alternative teacher certification programs through high-retention pathways can reduce barriers for underrepresented groups and increase diversity in the educator workforce. Additionally, these programs can provide an opportunity for professionals from diverse backgrounds and those with unique expertise and experience to transition into teaching. An example of a high-retention alternative pathways in Maine include teacher residencies. This program allows aspiring educators to gain hands-on experience in the classroom while receiving mentorship and support from experienced educators.

For "Maine to move forward with economic growth, it must continue to attract and embrace immigration, both international and domestic, and welcome diverse populations." These alternative pathways must be high-retention and provide continued resources to support, retain, and advance diverse educators from underrepresented communities. We recognize that there are barriers to entering the teaching profession. A report by the Learning Policy Institute found that teachers of color are more likely to leave the profession within the first few years of teaching than white teachers. Additionally, the "What Will It Take for Educators of Color to Thrive in PPS" report highlights the need for programs that not only recruit diverse candidates but also provide support and resources to retain them.

In conclusion, alternative teacher certification programs provide an opportunity for underrepresented groups and those with unique expertise to become certified educators. LD 1217 provides an opportunity to invest resources in initiatives that recruit, retain, and support a more diverse educational workforce and advance Maine as a diverse, equitable, and inclusive place to live, learn and work.

Thank you for your time and consideration.