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Senator, District 21

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

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Augusta, Maine 04333

**Testimony introducing
LD 1217, "Resolve, to Create a Pilot Program for Alternative Teacher Certification"**

**Senator Peggy Rotundo
April 13, 2023**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and other distinguished members of the Committee On Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Peggy Rotundo and I represent Senate District 21, the City of Lewiston. I am here today to introduce LD 1217, "Resolve, to Create a Pilot Program for Alternative Teacher Certification".

Lewiston, like so many other school districts around the state, is facing a critical shortage of teachers and educational technicians. While I acknowledge that significant pay increases could make a difference in the district's ability to recruit and retain talented professionals, the reality of town budgets necessitates that in addition to the consideration of higher salaries, we think creatively about additional ways to address the shortages we now face.

I present a bill today, LD 1217, An Act to Create a Pilot Program for Alternative Teacher Certification, which will enable the Department of Education to develop pilot projects designed to provide alternative teacher and education technicians certificates, targeting those who represent demographic areas that are currently underrepresented or who hold unique experiences. Candidates must demonstrate the knowledge and skills that are defined within nationally recognized standards for beginner educators. The program must allow an individual who receives an alternative certificate to renew that certificate for a reasonable amount of time until the individual can achieve traditional certification. The bill also requires the Department of Education to report back to the Legislature no later than December 6, 2023.

I have worked with the Department of Education on this bill. They will be offering suggested amended language in their testimony. Educational technicians will be added to teachers in the bill, for example. Their amendment would also add a timeline by which certification would need to be completed.

I want to stress that my purpose in bringing this bill forward is not to water down standards and provide an inferior education to children in our public schools. As a former public school teacher, I would never propose this. LD 1217 is also not designed to be a long-term solution to our teacher shortage problem. There are other bills that address this problem and that you will be hearing this session. My bill simply presents this Committee and the DOE with the opportunity to explore possibilities that can help address the more immediate and pressing shortage of teachers and ed techs in our classrooms without compromising standards.

Thank you for your willingness to consider the possibilities this bill provides your committee. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.