



TO: Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
FROM: Megan London, Education Department Chair, EMCC
RE: Testimony in Support of LD 343, An Act to Invest in an Educational Technician
Training Program to Address Shortages in Public Schools
DATE: April 20, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, please accept this testimony in support of LD 343 on behalf of the Eastern Maine Community College Education Department.

One of the essential components of a quality experience-based education technician training program is the ability to honor teachers for their mentorship. The additional time and energy they put forth to support the development of a learner in an experience-based program is precious time for educators who already perform a myriad of functions throughout their regular school day and are often stretched in many ways. Providing a stipend for mentor teachers is one important way to recognize their essential role in the learning process. Without the ability to pay mentor teachers for their work, we are asking them to provide an essential service for free.

The continuation of funding of the Learning Facilitator program proposed in LD 343 would not only allow for the Learning Facilitator program to remain free of cost to learners who enroll in the program, it would allow for the continuation of teacher stipends to honor their mentorship of learners. The goal of the Learning Facilitator program is to lessen the stress on teachers by providing them a qualified support person who can help them to manage their classrooms with careful guidance. However, to reach that goal, we must first train the learners in the best possible way.

For those learners who are part of MDOE-funded cohorts, we can provide stipends to mentor teachers because the cost is built into our current budget. As we have diversified our funding sources to meet the growing waiting list demands and the needs of our school partners, we find that many of those funding sources do not consider mentor teacher stipends an allowable expense. The funding proposed in LD 343 would allow us to allocate additional funds for mentor teacher stipends even when the learner funding source may not allow for those stipends. This allows us to maintain equity of opportunity, to honor all mentor teachers for their significant contribution to the program and maintain the consistency and quality of the training experience for our learners.

For these reasons, I urge you to support this bill.