

State of Maine
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Testimony of Michael Perry, Acting Director of the Higher Education & Educator Support Services

In Support of: L.D. 343

An Act to Invest in an Educational Technician Training Program to Address Shortages in Public Schools

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Sponsored by: Representative Brennan

Date: April 20, 2023

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

My name is Michael Perry, and I am testifying on behalf of the Department of Education in support of LD 343, An Act to Invest in an Educational Technician Training Program to Address Shortages in Public Schools, which proposes to provide ongoing funds to support the Learning Facilitator Credential Program at Eastern Maine Community College (EMCC).

The Learning Facilitator Program began in 2020 after Governor Mills issued Executive Order No 7 FY 20/21, *An Order Regarding Pre K-12 Education*, which in addition to other measures allowed for emergency support staff credentialing. Later, a specific pathway for Emergency Education Technician III credentialing was included in the updated language for State Board of Education Rule Chapter 115: *The Credentialing of Education Personnel*.

An Emergency Ed Tech III certification differs from the traditional Ed Tech III certification in that instead of a mandatory 90 credit hours of instruction, applicants complete a program which focuses on competency in the targeted skills required of an Ed Tech III in the classroom. In the case of the EMCC Learning Facilitator program, participants complete an intensive three-credit course of instruction and then launch into an immersive teaching apprenticeship at a Maine school, participating in the classroom under the guidance of EMCC faculty and, crucially, a local peer mentor. Each participant is formally evaluated twice by their mentor teachers.

To support this program, the Department of Education allocated money from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER) to support SAUs employing Learning Facilitator program participants. Qualifying SAUs could invoice the DOE for up to 315 hours of actual pay at a maximum of \$14.00/hour, or up to \$4,410 per participant. These DOE reimbursements to SAUs occurred in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years. The salary of individuals paid with federal funds – under Title I, for example – were not reimbursed.

Under LD 343, funding for the Department of Education's support of the Learning Facilitator Program will continue through the General Fund.

The Maine education community continues to struggle with an educator workforce shortage. Our ed techs are a valuable resource to our schools, and increasing training pathways for these positions is an important aspect of growing and strengthening the Maine educator workforce. For this reason, the Department is in support of LD 343. I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have and will be available for work sessions on this bill.