



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Michael Brennan

49 Wellington Road
Portland, ME 04103
Phone: (207) 939-6462

Michael.Brennan@legislature.maine.gov

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Testimony of Representative Michael Brennan introducing

LD 343, An Act to Invest in an Educational Technician Training Program to Address Shortages in Public Schools

LD 1366, An Act to Address Educational Technician Shortages in Public Schools by Establishing an Alternative Certification Pathway

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty and fellow members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. I am Michael Brennan, and I represent House District 115, which includes a portion of Portland. I am here to introduce **LD 343, An Act to Invest in an Educational Technician Training Program to Address Shortages in Public Schools** and **LD 1366, An Act to Address Educational Technician Shortages in Public Schools by Establishing an Alternative Certification Pathway**.

As we have repeatedly heard this session, our public schools are facing significant workforce shortages. These two bills address this issue.

Fortunately, we have developed a unique approach to help more individuals receive the training they need to be Ed Tech IIIs. Ed Tech IIIs are critical to the functioning of our schools. Yet many schools are struggling to fill these positions.

The Learning Facilitator Program at Eastern Maine Community College is helping to address the shortages our schools face by providing job-site training, reflection and mentorship for an entire school year for those enrolled. By nearly all accounts, the program has been a success. In fact, as others that speak after me can talk about in more detail, the program currently has a waiting list. With the reported shortages, I hope we can all prioritize the funding to make sure the program is open to all qualified applicants. Supporting and expanding this program can directly respond to the workforce shortages facing our public schools.

LD 1366 provides that the Commissioner of Education may approve training programs for certification as an Ed Tech III offered by accredited postsecondary institutions in Maine, including learning facilitator programs offered by the Maine Community College System. An

applicant who successfully completes an approved program and meets all certification requirements may be certified as an Ed Tech III.

However, the Learning Facilitator Program is only budgeted for the current fiscal year. No commitments have been made to continue funding this program. While there may be other avenues to pursue for funding in support of this program, I hope we can all agree to at least continue the state support to make sure this program continues. LD 343 is a simple appropriation of \$200,000 for each of the next two years to make sure this program can continue to operate. I believe this matches current funding for the program. I am interested in whether there is an opportunity to scale this program up and provide this opportunity to more interested applicants. But at least securing this appropriation will make sure the program will continue for two more years.

Last session, there was a robust discussion about this program in this Committee. At the time, the Committee wanted to prevent Ed Techs who complete the program from then applying for emergency teacher certificates. I believe the language of LD 1366 maintains that prohibition.

Others who come after me today can talk more in detail about the program. I suggest you hold any specific questions for those who follow me today. Thank you for your attention to this important legislation.