

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Janet Kuech and I am a Title 1 Ed Tech III at the George E Jack Elementary School in Standish. I am here today to testify in support of LD 955, 974, 1237 and 1314.

I came to this school of about 150 4th and 5th graders 3 years ago, after just over 20 years in the Gorham School District. I left the realm of special education to take a rare opportunity to work 14 hours per week. I had 1-3 days per week to work as a substitute teacher to supplement my income for the first 2 years. The intervention schedule this year presented a unique opportunity for me to have grade level flex groups at the beginning and end of each student day. I got special permission to pick up 1.5 hours working as a recess and lunch monitor in between my academic support groups.

I use a badge or iPad to clock in and out 3 times each day, Monday through Thursday. My 3.5 hours as an Ed Tech III with a Bachelor's degree and 20+ years of experience are paid near the top of the scale at just under \$23 per hour. My 1.5 hours are paid at \$16 per hour. The other monitors I work with include bus drivers (who fill out timecards) and regular school staff. Not only am I taking an almost \$7 per hour hit for performing the duties my colleagues have included in their workday, I also am now in a Social Security wage category in addition to my Maine State Retirement wages. On our 2 early release days per month, my duties and hours do not line up, so I have to leave the cafeteria (covered by other adults) to go upstairs to the staff room to clock out and back in.

If support staff wages were higher, then I would not have to deal with such a big discrepancy. We are trained professionals dealing with important unstructured time in our students' days. We scramble on an almost daily basis to cover all of our duties when people are pulled to cover classrooms or are out sick.

Please remember that we wear many hats and shoulder tremendous responsibilities for the young people we interact with. We deserve to earn living wages for dedicating our lives to our educational support professions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.