



Maine Education Association

Grace Leavitt President | Jesse Hargrove Vice President | Beth French Treasurer
Rebecca Cole NEA Director | Rachelle Bristol Executive Director

Testimony

In Support of

LD 1608 An Act to Address Teacher Shortages Through Financial Assistance and Career Advancement Opportunities

Grace Leavitt, President, Maine Education Association

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs

April 20, 2023

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

My name is Grace Leavitt. My pronouns are she, her, hers. I am serving as President of the Maine Education Association while on leave from teaching Spanish in MSAD 51. I have over 43 years of classroom teaching experience with 20 years as a National Board Certified teacher. The MEA represents nearly 24,000 educators in our Maine system of public education in pre-K-12 schools as well as in our institutions of higher education, both the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System, along with students in teacher prep programs as well as many retired educators.

I am here to testify on behalf of MEA in support of LD 1608 An Act to Address Teacher Shortages Through Financial Assistance and Career Advancement Opportunities.

I realize I am repeating what you have heard many times already this session and what I am sure you already were aware of prior to the beginning of the session—that we are experiencing a critical shortage of teachers across the state in a variety of content areas and at all levels of instruction. What we saw coming years ago has worsened all the more these last few years than even we had anticipated. You have already heard that better compensation is a top priority, and that there are also a number of initiatives proposed and even underway to help address the need for attracting and retaining greater numbers of qualified and prepared people to the profession.

One of these initiatives is an already successful program, the Maine Teacher Residency Program. This program provides the training, the support, and the experience that ensures quality preparation for those seeking to become fully certified teachers. In addition, participants in the program are better able to pursue this path due to the financial component of paid internships, tuition support, and includes pay for the mentors who work with the participants.

The program was made possible through the efforts of Dr. Flynn Ross and federal funding secured by Maine Senators King and Collins which will support the program for a second year. LD 1608 would provide what is needed for this program to continue beyond 2023-2024.

MEA sees this program as playing a key role in addressing both the teacher shortage and meanwhile the program provides schools with much-needed staff as the interns fill various support positions in districts across the state.



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The other measures called for in the bill are also of great importance—both the Educators for Maine loans and the study of career ladders are important in recruiting students to the field of education and in helping to inform ways of retaining quality educators going forward.

MEA urges the Committee to vote ‘ought to pass’ on LD 1608 as amended.

<https://usm.maine.edu/news/10-11-22-new-teacher-residency-program-seeks-to-address-teacher-shortage>

<https://sites.google.com/maine.edu/maine-teacher-residency-home>



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