

Date: April 20, 2023

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

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

LD 1608, An Act to Address Teacher Shortages Through Financial Assistance and Career Advancement Opportunities proposes on-going funding to support the Maine Teacher Residency Program at the University of Southern Maine (USM) and requires Maine Education Policy Research Institute to study the development of career ladders.

The Maine education community faces growing teacher shortages, and we appreciate any innovative methods for supporting the development of our educator workforce. By participating in a teacher residency program, an aspiring educator holding a BA outside of the educational field can receive crucial experience working in a classroom while taking evening courses to finish the requirements for teacher certification in Maine in one year.

In addition to boosting teacher recruitment, there is evidence that educators leave residency programs feeling better prepared as a result of relationships they have developed in the community and the length of time they have spent in the classroom, leading to schools with higher teacher retention rates.

The Department offers two suggestions for the Committee to consider. First, we suggest changing the language in Section 2 to be inclusive of all alternative teacher preparation pilots. The USM teacher residency program is a good model that should be supported, and the Department of Education would like the flexibility to support other innovative teacher preparation programs. Second, should funding go to the Department for this bill, we recommend moving the funds out of General Purpose Aid to a specific fund within the Educator Excellence team within the Higher Education and Educator Support Services Team at the Department.

Sincerely,



Michael Perry

Acting Director of Higher Education and Educator Supports