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THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

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Testimony of Senator Teresa S. Pierce introducing
**LD 1068, An Act to Address Teacher Shortages Through Financial Assistance
and Career Advancement Opportunities**
before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
April 20, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Teresa Pierce, and I represent Senate District 25, which includes Falmouth, Cumberland, North Yarmouth, Yarmouth (majority), Gray, and Long Island. Today, I am pleased to introduce LD 1068, An Act to Address Teacher Shortages Through Financial Assistance and Career Advancement Opportunities

We are all aware of the critical need we have in Maine to recruit and train teachers for our PreK-12 schools. LD 1068 seeks to build off an existing, successful, program that first began as a 2019 Pilot Program through University of Southern Maine and the Biddeford School District. That program was such a success that the University of Maine System (USM) pursued and received \$1M in federal funds through Senators King and Collins and the Congressional Directed Spending Fund. With these funds USM developed and launched The New Teacher Residency Program. The residency program has three components:

1. Student Teacher Residents are hired and paid by the school district to work in the schools and given a \$3,500 scholarship via UMS, which covers their tuition at the University.
2. Experienced Educator provides intensive mentoring and co-teaching to the student as well as monthly sessions with UMS staff to evaluate and track progress.
3. Coordination by UMS of the program including evaluation of residents and mentor teachers and recruitment.

To date, 38 students and mentor teachers have participated in the program with another 78 slated for next year. Teacher residencies are taking place across the state from Fort Kent to Kennebunk providing districts with a pipeline of future teachers while also recognizing the expertise of our experienced educators. Essentially, this successful program pairs veteran teachers with young, aspiring teachers to mentor them and help develop the necessary skills and intangibles to be successful teachers and give both entities some financial support during the process.

The UMS has done a mid-year evaluation survey to get a sense of how the program is going.

Quotes from Residents include:

“Being able to teach while completing my teacher preparation has allowed me to immediately apply relevant practices in my classroom,” said one student.

Another student said, “My biggest success is almost being done with the teaching program and being able to have a job during student teaching. Without the job, I wouldn’t have been able to afford student teaching.”

90% of residents received a “high” or “adequate” level of support from their mentor teacher. I’m unaware of another program that delivers these rates of success.

Experienced educators, who serve as mentors to these new teachers, agree that this program works.

“The biggest success was having my mentee for so long,” said one educator. “The students were able to build true, lasting relationships and knew they could count on my mentee.”

96% of mentors agreed that their “students benefited academically from having the Resident in the classroom,” with 65% in strong agreement.

As legislators, we are always looking for programs that work and have proven results. This program does just that and for a modest investment, this program has the potential to recruit and train close to 100 teachers annually for employment in our schools all over the State.

I hope you will join me in passing this legislation.

Thank you for your time today and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Amendments

Please strike Section 1. With the outstanding work done on the Maine State Grant program, we are not in need of changing the Educators for Maine loan program at this time.

The following appropriations and allocations are made.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM - BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Initiative: Provides ongoing funds to support the continuation of the Maine Teacher Residency Program administered by the University of Maine System that seeks to address teacher shortages in the State by connecting postsecondary education students with paid education positions in Maine schools while the students continue to take classes to fulfill the students' education or related degree or certification requirements.

Sec. 2. Report. Resolved: That, by December 1, 2024, and annually each year thereafter, the University of Maine System shall submit a report on the Maine Teacher Residency to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.