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STATE OF MAINE
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PENDER MAKIN
COMMISSIONER

April 24, 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 Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 1491, An Act to Support Rural Education, requires the Department of Education to appoint a rural education coordinator, develop and implement a pilot program for grants to support aspiring rural educators, and to develop and implement a one-time program to provide stipends to rural teachers. This bill would also require an annual report beginning January 2025.

The bill does not define the term 'rural education' and it is unclear if the term is synonymous with the term 'rural administrative unit' which is defined for purposes of allocating federal funds in Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, §15401 (4) For purposes of allocating federal funds under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, 20 United States Code, Chapter 70, Subchapter V, "rural school administrative unit" means a school administrative unit in which no single municipality within the school administrative unit has a population over 8,000 residents for purposes of federal funding under the Every Student Succeeds Act.

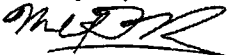
In 2022, recognizing the growing education staffing challenges that Maine school administrative units (SAUs) are facing, the Maine Department of Education (DOE) requested, and in February 2023, was granted the reclassification of a staff member to address the growing education workforce shortage in Maine. The State Education Representative position develops work plans to address Maine schools' needs; identifying and providing continuously updated lists of education workforce resources; designing and implementing events and initiatives to attract people to enter the education workforce, promote opportunities, and increase education workforce diversity; coordinating, implementing, and supporting incentive programs for the education workforce; and promoting the Commissioner's and Governor's initiatives and goals related to education workforce development.

The DOE does not currently collect vacancy data (e.g., positions that remained unfilled; retention, mobility, and attrition data including aggregate reasons for staying and reasons for leaving). Without this local, regional, and state vacancy data (e.g., positions that remained unfilled; retention, mobility, and attrition data including aggregate reasons for staying and

reasons for leaving), and without connecting the demand data to supply data to reveal and understand the patterns and trends, gaps will persist in our understanding of where localities are seeing shortages and surpluses in Maine's education workforce and return on investment of this bill may not be realized.

The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 1491 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:


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Michael Perry

Acting Director of Higher Education & Educator Support Services