



Maine Education Association

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

Testimony

In Support

LD 1510: An Act to Provide Grants to Promote Innovative Learning Strategies
Mallory Cook, Director of Training and Early Educator Engagement,
Maine Education Association

Before the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

May 2, 2023

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

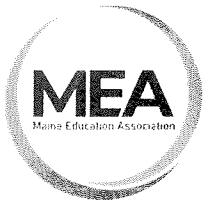
My name is Mallory Cook (pronouns she/her/hers), and I am the Director of Training and Early Educator Engagement at the Maine Education Association, and a certified English teacher and Building Administrator. I am here to provide testimony in support of LD 1510: An Act to Provide Grants to Promote Innovative Learning Strategies.

There might be days on this committee, after hours of public hearings, that you find your mind drifting, not because the issues are not important to you, but because an environment where you must simply sit and listen, with limited time for questions, can be challenging. This rings true for our students as well. During my time as an educator, I spent a great deal of energy on developing curriculum that would engage my students. I learned early on that failure to do so would result in 20 high schoolers looking at me, eyes glazed over, willing the bell to ring and free them. This was especially true for one of my favorite courses - Technical English; a course for seniors with ambitions to enter the workforce immediately following graduation. At one time in their high school career, some of these students were identified as at-risk; engaging them in their learning was integral to keeping them in the classroom.

Some of these units involved partnerships with businesses in the community, creating space for guest speakers, conducting job-site observations, or engaging in job shadows; some involved projects where students needed to present problems and solutions to the school committee; some involved mock interviews in front of the administrative team, and other units created relevant experiences for the students based on their career of interest. Regardless of the unit, creating these opportunities took time and resources. This grant would provide schools with the opportunity to collaborate with businesses and higher ed institutions and to access resources that would enable more teachers to take the time to develop these opportunities and funds if their project requires materials, transportation costs, or other expenses.

35 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330 | 1349 Broadway, Bangor, ME 04401
7 Hatch Drive, Suite 220, Caribou, ME 04736 | 29 Christopher Toppi Drive, South Portland ME 04106

207-622-5866 | 207-888-2070 fax | www.maineea.org



Maine Education Association

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

The MEA stood before this committee earlier in the session in support of LD 156: An Act to Require Recess Time for Students in Grades 6 – 8. At that public hearing, members of the committee heard a lot about student engagement, the growing sedentary lifestyles of our youth, and the importance of movement and socializing in school; a few committee members asked questions about project-based learning and how implementing those practices more universally would help to encourage a more active and social school day. We certainly agree they would. This grant would enable districts to receive the professional development needed to review their curricula to make decisions about where they could implement more innovative strategies.

Engagement in school has been linked to improved academic achievement, attendance, and participation in school activities; thus, students feel more connected to their school community and more confident in their abilities. Given the disruptions to connectedness caused by the pandemic, this is the perfect opportunity to assist districts who were most impacted.

LD 1510 calls for routine technical rulemaking to govern procedures, criteria, and priorities for awarding grants. The MEA would be happy to share our views and to work alongside the department in the development of those rules.

Thank you for your time, and I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.