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THE MAINE SENATE  
132nd Legislature

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***Testimony of Senate Majority Leader Teresa S. Pierce introducing  
LD 34, An Act to Increase the Minimum Teacher Salary  
before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
February 26, 2025***

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Teresa Pierce, and I serve as Senate Majority Leader, representing Senate District 25, which includes Falmouth, Cumberland, North Yarmouth, most of Yarmouth, Gray, and Long Island. Today, I am pleased to introduce **LD 34, An Act to Increase the Minimum Salary for Teachers**.

When we think back to those who have most influenced our life, chances are that one of those people was a teacher. I remember Miss Cobb, my fourth grade teacher. She taught us fractions, how to read to learn, geography, and the history of our state, among many other things. She challenged us to work hard and dream big. Teachers have had this impact on students for generations. We need to ensure the next generation of teachers are ready and willing to inspire our students.

To do that, Maine will need to address its teacher workforce crisis. Right now, educators are leaving the field and not enough of our young adults are considering teaching as a profession to fill those open positions. According to MainePERS, in 2022, just three years ago, we saw a **record number of educator retirements or resignations**. In 2023, the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) found that 81% of respondents cited pay as the biggest perceived drawback to a career in education. A 2023 Educate Maine report concluded that Maine teachers made **24% less than comparable workers** statewide in 2021. This means professionals with similar credentials are making nearly 25% more than their counterparts in the education profession.

LD 32 would increase the minimum teacher salary to \$50,000 incrementally over the next five years. The step increments, as used in this bill, are geared toward allowing school districts to prepare and adjust for the change. Our teacher shortage is only going to grow, as a majority of Maine's teacher workforce will be retiring in the next 5-10 years. We need to prepare now and start aggressively recruiting and retaining teachers for a wave of employment opportunities in our public schools.

Our schools, the families in our districts, and the future of our communities rely on well-qualified educators teaching and mentoring our students, allowing them to grow, compete, and shine. It is our responsibility to ensure public education remains strong, and we have an opportunity before us to honor the unseen and underappreciated dedication and resolve Maine's school teachers have. I encourage you to support them and this bill today.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this important bill, and I am happy to answer your questions, or bring back information to the work session.

**Sen. Pierce Proposed Language Adjustments for LD 34:**

- In Section 3, strike lines 17-27, this would remove retroactive cost of living adjustments
- In Section 4, change date in Line 29 from July 1, 2028 to July 1, 2030
- Include teachers from Unorganized Territories in the salary increase