



Richard A. Bennett  
Senator, District 18

THE MAINE SENATE  
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

**Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs on  
LD 34, An Act to Increase the Minimum Salary for Teachers  
February 26, 2025**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am pleased to cosponsor both LD 34, "An Act to Increase the Minimum Salary for Teachers."

Teaching is a demanding career that requires dedication, expertise, and a passion for helping students succeed. Maine schools must offer competitive salaries to attract more talented individuals into the profession and prevent our current educators from leaving for more lucrative jobs.

The current minimum teacher salary in Maine is \$40,000. According to the National Education Association, the average starting teacher salary in 2024 was \$44,530. If we are going to attract new talent, our schools will need to exceed that average. This bill will increase our minimum salary above the NEA's average for the 2026-27 school year.

Teachers are foundational to the development of future generations. They shape the minds of students, preparing them for the challenges of the real world. Yet, despite the significant impact teachers have, many are still paid wages that do not reflect the value of these contributions. Raising wages is a way to recognize their hard work, commitment, and important role in society.

Teacher quality plays a big part in student success. By raising the minimum salary we can ensure that teachers are motivated and less financially stressed, translating into better teachers. Imagine how stressful it feels to try and oversee a classroom when you're afraid you won't make rent. Happier and more secure teachers are more likely to go above and beyond for their students, creating a more enriching and productive learning environment.

On top of supporting teachers, this is also a fairness issue. Those of us who represent small towns are used to hearing from town officials who can't find enough police officers or other municipal officials to meet the town's needs. The same is true with teachers. Those districts that have more resources are able to recruit experienced educators with higher salaries.

Raising the minimum teacher salary is not only a matter of fairness but also a sound investment in the long-term success of both students and our state as a whole. By ensuring that teachers are compensated appropriately for their work, we can improve educational outcomes, attract and retain talented educators, and create a more equitable and effective education system for all.

Investing in teachers is essentially investing in the future. Raise the minimum teacher salary and your kids and grandkids will thank you for investing in them. I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 34.