

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and other esteemed members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Gabby Jolin, and I live in Dover-Foxcroft. I am a 3rd year teacher at SeDoMoCha Middle School in RSU #68. I am writing to testify in support of LD 34, An Act to Increase the Minimum Teacher Salary in Maine. Raising the minimum teacher salary is not just a matter of fairness—it is an investment in our students, schools, and the future of our state. I urge you to support LD 34 to ensure that teachers like myself can afford to stay in the profession we love without financial hardship.

Despite working full-time in a profession that is crucial to the future of our state, I struggle to make ends meet on my salary. My current take-home pay is **\$2,636.44 per month**, and my essential expenses leave me with almost nothing left for savings, emergencies, or long-term financial stability. Below is a breakdown of my monthly costs:

Rent - \$950
Utilities - \$140
Phone - \$80
WiFi - \$80
Heat - \$100
Car insurance - \$150
Car payment - \$400
Gas - \$160
Groceries/household items/pet costs - \$450
Student loans - \$105
Total expenses: Approximately \$2,615

As you can see, my entire paycheck is spent on the cost of simply maintaining an independent lifestyle. I cannot afford to save for the future, and the idea of purchasing a home is currently out of reach. I have three credit cards that I rotate for unexpected costs and emergencies. Additionally, I am currently on my parents' health insurance, but I will age out of that coverage next year when I turn 26. These figures also do not include expenses related to the care of keeping of my horses and farm animals, which are also a vital part of my life, or any money to help fund the hobbies that bring me joy -- I love traveling, camping, hiking, kayaking, and snowshoeing, but I am often not able to enjoy these activities due to time and money.

To bring in additional income, I work two additional jobs—tutoring and homeschooling local students as well as teaching horseback riding lessons on a farm during weekends and school vacations. The additional workload of these jobs, combined with my full-time teaching responsibilities, results in 10-12 hour workdays and working on weekends. I am also pursuing a Masters degree to help move up the pay scale as much as I possibly can in my district, which I'm

trying to find the time to complete between my teaching job and part-time jobs. This is all taking a toll on my mental health and making me question whether I can continue in this profession long-term.

Teaching has been my lifelong dream, and I love my students, my school community, and being able to teach in my hometown. However, it is disheartening to realize that despite being a qualified, educated professional, I cannot afford to live within my means without relying on additional jobs or external financial support. Many dedicated educators are forced to leave this profession or relocate to states with more competitive salaries. Maine cannot afford to lose passionate teachers due to unsustainable wages. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gabby Jolin

gabriellejolin714@gmail.com