

Testimony For
The Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

February 26, 2025

To: Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy and other Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

From: Scott K. Porter, Superintendent of Schools, AOS 96 (11 Towns in Machias Area)

I am Scott Porter, the superintendent of AOS 96 (11 towns in the Machias area), testifying in support of the amended version of *L.D. 34, An Act to Increase the Minimum Salary for Teachers*.

This is a necessary step to attract more teachers to preK-12 education and make sure that every Maine student is taught by an experienced, qualified educator.

You've heard over and over again over the years about the state's teacher shortage, and the issue has only gotten worse. At one time, we were getting 10 or 15 applicants for an open teaching position. Today, we're fortunate to get 1 or 2. Certification challenges have made the situation even harder. At this moment, AOS 96 has two special education teacher openings that are going unfilled in Machias. We simply can't find the staff to provide the education that our kids need and deserve.

Pay is a big reason behind this shortage. Getting a young teacher to move to a rural town has always been a challenge, and the cost of living has only gone up. Since 2018, the cost of a home in Washington County has climbed by more than 75 percent. Getting our salaries to a competitive level would make a big difference in getting more students interested in education jobs and attracting them to great schools in places like Machias or Cutler or Whiting.

L.D. 34 also takes the important step of incrementally increasing salaries and providing state funding. We're already working towards raising teacher salaries through negotiations, but our local taxpayers are tapped out. They can't handle more tax increases, and if the state wants to add to our school budgets, it needs to provide us with adequate support.

We know the state budget is tight, but passing and funding this bill will make a big difference in our schools and improve education across the state. I ask you to support L.D. 34.