



**MAINE MUNICIPAL  
ASSOCIATION SINCE 1936**

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

**In Opposition To**

**LD 34 - *An Act to Increase the Minimum Salary for Teachers***

**February 26, 2025**

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Education & Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Rebecca Lambert, and I am providing testimony in opposition to LD 34 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) elected 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). For reference, the LPC guides MMA's advocacy efforts and establishes positions on bills of municipal interest.

Local leaders understand the intention behind this bill is to enhance teacher retention and recruitment but are concerned that raising the minimum salary would place an undue financial burden on municipalities and may ultimately harm the very communities it aims to help.

Municipalities face significant challenges when it comes to balancing their local budgets. School districts, which rely heavily on local property taxes and state funding, are already under considerable pressure, and increasing the minimum teacher salary would require municipalities to either raise taxes, cut funding for other essential services, or reject the school budget, which in turn causes school districts to consider how to divert resources—whether that is by reducing funds for school infrastructure or extracurricular programs.

Another concern among officials is that rural districts would be disproportionately affected since these areas typically have lower property values and fewer resources, and many already struggle to provide competitive wages for teachers, let alone meet a higher minimum salary standard for the area. While it may be appropriate for larger, wealthier districts to absorb these increases, smaller municipalities may not be in a position to do so without significant sacrifice.

It is also worth noting that the increase in teacher salaries could lead to a competitive bidding war between districts, especially in Maine's more populous regions. Rather than addressing the underlying issue of teacher retention in the most underserved areas, this could exacerbate the teacher shortage in rural districts, where salaries, even after an increase, may still fall behind those in cities with more robust economies. The unintended consequence may be that teachers move from lower-paying areas to higher-paying districts, leading to a vicious cycle where the neediest schools are left with fewer qualified educators.

Rather than focusing on across-the-board salary increases, our members urge you to consider more targeted approaches that offer municipalities the flexibility to address teacher compensation in ways that are sustainable and tailored to their unique needs. Investing in professional development programs, providing support for teacher retention through mentoring or specialized programs, and



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addressing classroom resources and school infrastructure will go further in improving the educational experience for both teachers and students, without overburdening local governments.

While our members fully support efforts to improve the quality of education in Maine, they respectfully ask that you reconsider the approach used in LD 34. The financial strain it places on municipalities, particularly in rural areas, is too great a risk, and the potential benefits may not justify the harm it could cause to communities already struggling to maintain essential services.

Thank you for your time and considering the municipal perspective.



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