



Maine Education Association

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Testimony In Opposition to LD 369: An Act to Grant or Extend Conditional Teaching Certificates Under Certain Circumstances March 11, 2025

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

My name is Mallory Cook, and I have the pleasure of serving the nearly 24,000 members of the Maine Education Association as the Director of Training and Early Educator Engagement. I am here today to testify in opposition of LD 369: An Act to Grant or Extend Conditional Teaching Certificates Under Certain Circumstances.

MEA acknowledges the current educator shortage and has consistently advocated for increased starting salaries and support for new professionals. We will continue to champion legislation that strengthens the workforce. However, we remain committed to maintaining high certification standards through Rule Chapter 115.

Given the shortages, there are alternative pathways for educators entering the profession. We believe granting additional extensions, even in certain circumstances, is not advisable. Rule Chapter 115 includes a certification waiver, allowing the Commissioner to grant employment waivers for individuals without appropriate certification, except for those endorsed in Special Education. This waiver provides time for individuals to complete their coursework while maintaining employment. As of today, Maine has 4,165 valid conditional certificates in the state, 294 emergency certificates, and 87 waivers. (MDOE)

According to an October 2024 report by the National Center for Education Statistics, the national average for teachers working on conditional or emergency certificates was 6.9%. Maine is one of seven states above this average, with 10% of its teacher workforce being conditionally or emergency certified. A conditional certificate is issued to teachers who are expected to meet certification requirements within three years, meaning they enter the classroom with less experience than traditionally certified teachers. A 2000 study by Hammond found negative correlations between uncertified teachers and student performance on six different state NAEP assessments. Conversely, there were positive correlations between professional certification or having a degree in the field of instruction and student performance, indicating that student achievement is significantly impacted by their teacher's preparation (Berliner, 2003).

Later this session, a bill will be presented that outlines a process for the department and school districts to better manage certification violations, including criminal history check violations and individuals working outside their certification. While such violations are unavoidable amid the current shortage, the pathways created through Rule Chapter 115 offer options for those pursuing a career in education. This

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upcoming bill addresses the lack of an adequate system for tracking and remedying these violations. Regarding LD 369, we have concerns that it may create additional challenges. The bill does not specify the duration for extending conditional certificates. Currently, a conditional certificate is a non-renewable three-year certificate. Extending these certificates could present logistical challenges for the certification department, especially given the thousands of conditional certifications across the state.

Thank you and I welcome any questions you may have.