



Maine Education Association

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Testimony

In Support of

LD 470: An Act to Require School Administrative Units to Adopt Mentoring Programs for Teachers and to Improve Existing Programs

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 support of LD 470: An Act to Require School Administrative Units to Adopt Mentoring Programs for Teachers and to Improve Existing Programs.

The Maine Education Association deeply appreciates the hope that this committee will support LD 34: An Act to Increase the Minimum Salary for Maine's Teachers. This is a crucial step our state must take to recruit and retain high-quality educators. Another essential component of our multipronged approach is investing in high-quality mentoring programs. These programs will ensure that new educators receive the support they need to remain in the profession, while avoiding the high costs of turnover. As one of our early career members put it while helping us to develop our mentor training, "without my mentor, I don't think I would have made it through my first year."

In addition to retention, mentoring programs can positively impact student achievement. A 2017 New Teacher Center study of grades 4-8 found that teachers who had mentors outperformed the control group, representing the equivalent of 2-3.5 months of additional English-Language Arts instruction. There were also statistically significant impacts on mathematics scores for both elementary and middle school students (Schmidt et al., 2017). When implemented with fidelity, mentoring programs are also proven to positively impact teaching practices, including classroom management, instructional techniques like lesson planning and delivery methods, differentiation strategies, improved assessment practices, content knowledge, and student engagement (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). Combined, these practices can support fewer disruptive behaviors and behavioral incidents.

Upon starting this role and working with members, I quickly identified two key issues. First, many new educators lacked assigned mentors. Second, numerous experienced educators were eager to mentor but felt unprepared due to insufficient training or were unwilling to do so without fair compensation. While peer support and mentoring are required under §13015, the proposed amendments in this bill aim to ensure compliance by providing mentoring support beyond the first year in a district. They also aim to support those entering the profession through alternative pathways outlined in Chapter 115, such as conditional and emergency certificates. Additionally, the amendments seek to enhance the development and availability of training opportunities and establish a reasonable stipend for mentors to account for the time spent supporting their mentees.

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This legislation is modeled after the Professional Evaluation and Professional Growth (PEPG) system, which aims to foster collaboration between the local association and administration. The bill enhances this collaboration by incorporating local educators' voices into the process. We hope that local associations will be positioned to support, encourage, and take ownership of aspects of the mentoring program.

Currently, the state mandates that mentors complete at least two observations annually and provide ongoing support and feedback to their mentees. However, these requirements vary significantly at the district level. As part of MEA's Best Practices in Mentoring training, we ask participants to submit their district's mentor responsibilities and stipends. Stipends range from zero to over \$2,000. Despite the stipend, many districts have requirements that exceed the state requirements, while others have no additional requirements, and some have no mentoring programs at all. It is unfair to expect educators to engage in unpaid labor solely out of altruism and a desire to support new professionals. They should be fairly compensated for this critical work, as their expertise is invaluable and essential for the success of new educators.

Sample of Responsibilities and Stipends Across Maine

Responsibilities	Stipend
Weekly meetings and two observations	\$0
Meet twice per month and two observations	\$250
Meet twice per month and perform two observations	\$350 per year
Meet once a week with two observations per year	\$500 per year
Weekly meetings and three observations per year	\$500 per year
Weekly meetings and three observations	\$1,000 per year
Weekly meetings and three observations	\$1,144 per year
Bi-weekly meetings and three observations	\$2,000 per year
No mentor program	N/A

Additionally, some mentoring programs within districts were established under Maine's previous certification system, where teachers would apply for a two-year provisional certificate before receiving a professional certificate. Thus, the mentor's responsibilities and training are rooted in guiding the mentee through the process of obtaining the professional certificate. Even if the programs have been updated, those who received training in this previous system need to understand the new certification requirements and best practices to support the educators with whom they are working. This is why the bill calls for routine professional development for mentors and a seven-year review cycle for all approved programs.

Should the committee vote to pass this bill, we request a slight language change in Section 3. The current proposed language requires a teacher to hold a valid Maine license for at least five years. We suggest changing this to a valid professional Maine license to ensure that individuals with long-term emergency or conditional certifications are not serving as mentors. Additionally, we propose that teachers who have held a valid professional certificate in another state for at least five years, who qualify for a professional certificate in Maine, and who have successfully taught in their respective district for at least one year may also qualify as mentors, provided they receive the endorsement from the local educators' union.

Thank you, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

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- Ingersoll, R. M., & Strong, M. (2011). The Impact of Induction and Mentoring Programs for Beginning Teachers: A Critical Review of the Research. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 201-233. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311403323> (Original work published 2011)
- Schmidt, R., Young, V., Cassidy, L., Wang, H., & Laguarda, K. (2017). Impact of the New Teacher Center's new teacher induction model on teachers and students. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. Retrieved from https://www.sri.com/sites/default/files/publications/ntc_i3_validation_eval_brief.pdf
- Young, V. M., Schmidt, R., Wang, H., Cassidy, L., & Laguarda, K. (2017, December). *A comprehensive model of teacher induction: Implementation and impact on teachers and students. Evaluation of the New Teacher Center's i3 Validation grant, final report*. SRI International.

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

I offer this testimony today in support of LD470, An Act to require School Administrative Units to Adopt Mentoring Programs for Teachers and to Improve Existing Programs.

My name is Suzanne Nelson and I am a Special Education Teacher in Lisbon at Gartley Street School.

In order to **recruit and retain** new teachers to the profession we need mentor support, and in order to entice teachers to become mentors we need to pay them for their time. The current stipend for this position is not nearly enough as we are having a hard time convincing teachers to do the job that requires three hours of meeting and paperwork for the school year, 35 weeks. Raising it to \$5000, (which amounts to \$23/hr) sends the message that the work of a mentor is important and valued.

We are trying hard to retain the teachers we have recruited in order to provide a continuity, and a smoother flow of education to our students. Without the support from quality mentors we lose teachers faster than we can replace them.

Please support this LD470, and the mentors who are working above and beyond the day.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Suzanne Nelson

Lisbon