

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 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 Noonan Murphy and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. I am Robbie Feinberg, the director of communications and government relations for Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 470.

L.D. 470 proposes to implement a stipend for mentors of new teachers. Our associations firmly believe in supporting new educators; however, we believe this bill is financially burdensome and would place undue strain on districts that are already struggling financially.

Existing Statute Already Requires Mentoring for New Teachers

Maine already has a statutory requirement for mentoring new teachers. Under Title 20-A, Section 13012-A, school administrative units are mandated to provide mentoring and induction programs for conditionally certified teachers. Similar requirements are in place for emergency certified teachers. This requirement ensures that new educators receive the necessary guidance and support to transition effectively into the profession. Stipends are provided to mentor teachers and coaches which are decided on locally. We believe that this process has been effective, and we appreciate the efforts in L.D. 470 to create new resources to assist districts in the development of their own programs. However, this bill would create an additional financial obligation without offering new solutions beyond what is already mandated.

L.D. 470 Creates an Unfunded Mandate

According to the latest *Educator Workforce Report*¹ from Educate Maine, more than 2,000 educators in Maine hold conditional or emergency certifications, all of whom require mentoring under state law. If each mentor were to receive a stipend under L.D. 470, the financial burden on districts would total at least \$10,000,000 per year. We expect that this bill's requirements to mentor other teachers – such as those with less than three years of experience – would increase the cost even further.

School districts across Maine are already facing significant financial challenges. Without dedicated state funding, districts would be forced to cut essential programs, reduce staff, or divert resources from other critical educational needs to comply with this requirement. The state should not impose additional financial obligations without providing the necessary funding to support them. At a time when Maine's schools are striving to recover from pandemic-related learning loss and teacher shortages, it is critical that we prioritize

¹ <https://www.educatemaine.org/docs/EM-Educator-Workforce-Report-2024.pdf>

funding for direct student support rather than imposing additional unfunded mandates on school systems. We think approaches like L.D. 696 – with increased state funding to support new and aspiring educators – are worthwhile strategies that will increase retention without affecting local budgets.

Again, we are in agreement that our teachers need mentorship to succeed, and we know that support for early educators is a crucial factor in helping them stay in this profession. But our schools simply cannot take on this unfunded mandate, and we would urge the committee to look at other supportive policies to assist our educators that would not place further strain on districts' budgets.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.