



Teresa S. Pierce
Senator, District 25
Senate Majority Leader

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

6 Waites Landing Road
Falmouth, ME 04105

***Testimony of Senate Majority Leader Teresa S. Pierce introducing
LD 696, An Act to Bolster the Maine Teacher Residency Program
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
March 11, 2025***

Chair Rafferty, Chair Murphy, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Teresa S. Pierce. I serve as the Senate Majority Leader, representing Senate District 25, which includes Falmouth, Cumberland, North Yarmouth, Yarmouth (majority), Gray, and Long Island. I'm pleased to introduce **LD 696, An Act to Bolster the Maine Teacher Residency Program**.

LD 696 seeks to continue funding a proven, successful program that first began in the 2020-2021 school year as a Pilot through University of Southern Maine and the Biddeford School District. That program was such a success that the University of Maine System (UMS) secured \$1M in Congressionally Directed Spending through Senators King and Collins. These funds—**paired with additional appropriations I secured in the 131st Legislature**, UMS now leads our state's premier educator training program, the Maine Teacher Residency Program.

The program pairs students enrolled in UMS education programs with mentor teachers in local school districts, providing both parties with stipends. The student teacher completes their on the job coursework, earning real-world experience and alleviating the teacher workforce shortage. And it works. Nearly 100 teachers have successfully completed this program with 34 school districts participating. Today, 23 residents are paired with mentor teachers, in classrooms teaching.

Zachary from Houlton, an MTRP alum, now enrolled in the two-year education masters program, was paired with a mentor teacher in the social studies department at Falmouth High School. He emphasized that his mentor was crucial in the student teaching process. "The best thing about the residency is having a mentor teacher who's invested in me and my success. Any time I needed something, like the tiniest question, I had someone who I felt comfortable with at all times going to and asking that question," said Zachary.

Abby from the Scarborough School District and Amanda from the Biddeford School District, mentor teachers in the MTRP, see the benefits in their classrooms. "We have seen the value of participating in the project firsthand. We had the opportunity to connect with fellow educators, expand our toolkit of resources, and gain new insights by working with student teachers."



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This low-cost, strategic, and measurable program will run out of funds this year if the Legislature and Congress do not act. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. The direct impact this program has on our teacher workforce is great and we see it already making a difference in the lives of students across Maine.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this bill and for your attention to this matter. I look forward to the work session and am happy to answer any questions you may have.