

State of Maine  
State Board of Education

Testimony of Thomas Keller, Member of the Maine State Board of Education and Chair of the Certification and Higher Education Committee Neither For Nor Against LD 696 – An Act to Bolster the Maine Teacher Residency Program.

February 28, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Dr. Tom Keller and I am a member of the Maine State Board of Education, I chair its Certification and Higher Education Committee and I am here today representing the State Board. I am testifying Neither For Nor Against LD 696– An Act to Bolster the Maine Teacher Residency Program.

Pursuant to Section 401 of Title 20-A, the State Board of Education is *“intended to act as a body with certain policy-making, administrative and advisory functions. In those capacities, the board has the primary responsibility for the following:*

- 1. Formulating policy. Formulating policy by which the commissioner shall administer certain regulatory tasks;*
- 2. Advising commissioner. Advising the commissioner in the administration of all the mandated responsibilities of that position; and*
- 3. Enforcing regulatory requirements. Enforcing regulatory requirements for school administrative units.*

*The state board may advise the commissioner and the Legislature on matters concerning state laws relating to public preschool to grade 12 and postsecondary education.”*

The State Board recognizes that the demand for high quality teachers outstrips their supply. We acknowledge and applaud the efforts of Maine’s higher education institutions and K-12 systems in developing alternative pathways to educator certification. This program at the University of Southern Maine is an excellent example of Mainers working together to provide new and innovative solutions to the issue of teacher supply.

This program appears to be strong in its preparation and support of people entering the teaching profession. New teachers receive high quality mentoring support as well as advanced coursework while working in Maine classrooms. They learn and apply new pedagogical skills tied to content under the watchful eyes of master mentors in the schools and in the university.

While we are neither for nor against this particular bill, we are in strong support of the concept.

I am happy to address any questions you have.

Thank you.