

State of Maine  
State Board of Education

Testimony of Dr. Thomas Keller, Member of the Maine State Board of Education and chair of its Certification and Higher Education Committee neither for nor against LD 1327 An Act to Improve and Expand Student Teaching Opportunities in Maine by Compensating Student Teaching

April 22, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is 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 1327 An Act to Improve and Expand Student Teaching Opportunities in Maine by Compensating Student Teaching.

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."*

Serving in that capacity the State Board of Education finds itself neither for nor against LD 1327 An Act to Improve and Expand Student Teaching Opportunities in Maine by Compensating Student Teaching for a variety of reasons:

1. There are 15 higher education institutions in Maine that prepare teachers: Bates College, Bowdoin College, Colby College, College of the Atlantic, Eastern Maine Community College, Husson University, Maine College of Art and Design, Saint Joseph's College, Thomas College, University of Maine at Augusta, University of Maine at Farmington, University of Maine at Machias, University of Maine, University of New England, and University of Southern Maine. Six of those are University of Maine campuses. What will happen at these other 9 campuses? Will they have to bill the UMS?
2. According to Higher Education Act Title 2 data from the US Department of Education, in 2023, there were 664 cooperating teachers and 969 student teachers in Maine. At \$500 per month for 4 months, those 664 cooperating teachers would be due \$1.3 million. At \$500 per week for 15 weeks, those student teachers would be due \$7.3 million.
3. Some campuses already compensate student teachers and cooperating teachers. Is this amount in line with them?
4. Would student teachers who received the stipend and choose to teach at town academies would have to repay the stipend?
5. Mileage is to be reimbursed as well. What mileage rate will be used?

6. Section 4 of this LD states that if a student teacher who received a stipend but became employed at a private or out of state school, they would have to repay the stipend. There are cases in which a student teacher has to take a position at a private or out of state school and while the intent is laudable, it seems like punishment to require repayment.

6. At the Certification and Higher Education Committee of the State Board of Education, we have discussed the possibility of housing a student teacher in the home of a district, perhaps rural, teacher, to reduce travel time, to build awareness of how much teachers really work, to increase rapport, and to compensate, somehow, teachers who rent out a bedroom in an otherwise empty nest knowing that our teacher population is aging. This would also encourage student teachers to be placed in more rural districts since they would not have to return to dorms each night and many novice teachers return to the districts from which they graduated high school. Developing and funding such a program may be more innovative and impactful.

Paying student teachers and cooperating teachers is certainly worth investigating. As well, it is worth investigating the recruitment, selection, and training of cooperating teachers, placement of student teachers with appropriate cooperating teachers, clear expectations for student teachers, and even a statewide effort to share manuals, guidebooks, guidance and other such materials among educator preparation programs. These may build a better system of support beyond LD 1327.

These are examples of actions the State Board of Education could undertake if it had staff and funding.

I would be pleased to address your questions.

Thank you.