

**Maine Education Association**  
Jesse Hargrove President | Beth French Vice President | Jaye Rich Treasurer  
Rebecca Cole NEA Director | Rachelle Bristol Executive Director

**Testimony**

**In Support Of**

**LD 1495: An Act to Make the Professional Standards Board Responsible for the Educator Certification Process**

**Mallory Cook, Training and Early Educator Engagement Director, Maine Education Association**

**Before the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee**

**April 25th, 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 1495: *An Act to Make the Professional Standards Board Responsible for the Educator Certification Process*.

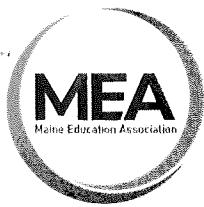
The Maine Education Association deeply appreciates the efforts of the State Board's Certification and Higher Education Committee over the last few years, as they have worked tirelessly to review parts I and II of Chapter 115: The Credentialing of Education Personnel. Though this process allows multiple channels for stakeholder input, we believe there are models used across the nation that would better support our efforts to recruit, retain, and strengthen the workforce by infusing the voice of practicing educators into the process, at every level of certification.

Maine currently has a Professional Standards Board established by statute, comprising 22 appointed positions and two ex officio positions. These appointments include teachers at various developmental levels, special educators, education specialists, building administrators, curriculum directors, a member of the public, faculty from approved educator preparation programs, education technicians, the commissioner or their designee, and a member of the state board. The Governor makes these appointments based on recommendations from the largest organization representing each respective group.

Because the Professional Standards Board in Maine serves an advisory role, it exists to share information with the state board. This has made it challenging to establish a quorum. As you all know, our educators are exceptionally busy and must prioritize their time to do what is in the best interest of their students. When I started this role, I connected with our appointed members, and they expressed that they did not see the value in participating. This was also the case in Washington State; their board initially had advisory duties and struggled to engage its members. However, once regulatory roles were established, the board became much more active. The Washington Professional Standards Board now sets policy and oversees certification and educator preparation.

35 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330 | 1349 Broadway, Bangor, ME 04401  
PO Box 310, Caribou, ME 04736 | 29 Christopher Toppi Drive, South Portland ME 04106

207-622-5866 | 207-888-2070 fax | [www.maineea.org](http://www.maineea.org)



**Maine Education Association**  
Jesse Hargrove President | Beth French Vice President | Jaye Rich Treasurer  
Rebecca Cole NEA Director | Rachelle Bristol Executive Director

According to the National Educator Standards Board 2017 Report, there are 10 states whose Professional Standards Boards maintain authority over licensure and certification. These states include California, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming. Additionally, Connecticut passed a bill last session to transfer certification standards to a certification board, with a composition very similar to that of a professional standards board.

When it comes to providing comments on the current certification rules, it is feasible for an MEA staffer, a higher education professional, or a district administrator to step away to do so during a state board certification meeting, which begins at 10:30 AM, or during an afternoon or evening public comment session. For an educator to do so, quite frankly, it is usually because they have a specific grievance. Perhaps their certification was denied for some reason, or they were upset about an additional course they needed to take. While these concerns are valid, more holistic conversations are critical.

Establishing a Professional Standards Board with this authority would create the space and opportunities for important conversations to happen with all the right people in the room. If the right people are not present, the professionals in the room can return to their respective schools/worksites and consult an expert. This larger feedback loop will ensure that the rules are created by educators, for educators. We believe this is essential at a time when we are facing a critical shortage and issues with retention.

Lastly, we believe this work deserves compensation. As I have mentioned in previous testimony, we should not expect educators to engage in unpaid labor purely out of altruism. This work is critical and will directly impact both current and future educators. One of the reasons maintaining a quorum is challenging is that educators are more likely to choose roles with stipends, such as coaching basketball or advisory positions, over roles without compensation. This is not because the work is less valuable, but because they understand the importance of being compensated for their time and effort.

Thank you, and I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.