

State of Maine  
State Board of Education

Testimony of Dr. Thomas Keller, Member of the Maine State Board of Education and Chair of the Certification and Higher Education Committee Neither For Nor Against LD 1495 – An Act to Make the Professional Standards Board Responsible for the Educator Certification Process

April 14, 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 1495 – An Act to Make the Professional Standards Board Responsible for the Educator Certification Process

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 1495 – An Act to Make the Professional Standards Board Responsible for the Educator Certification Process for several reasons:

The Professional Standards Board (PSB) is comprised of 22 members and 2 ex officio members (a State Board member and the commissioner or designee). Twenty one of the 22 are required to be active, that is, working, educational practitioners. They serve without compensation.

The currently legislated purposes of the PSB are to:

- make recommendations to the state board, including, but not limited to, preservice education, continuing education, professional growth, initial certification, recertification and paraprofessional training and certification, and advise the department on rule-making procedures.
- monitor the impact of the policies adopted pursuant to preservice education, continuing education, professional growth, initial certification, recertification and paraprofessional training and certification on the education profession in making recommendations and reports to the commissioner and the state board, and,
- consider complaints received by the department regarding the certification or certification approval process.

I served as the State Board representative for one year and a colleague from the State Board served the most recent year. During those two years, the PSB has never reached a meeting quorum of at least 12 members.

Currently the State Board is amending Chapter 115 Educator Certification as directed by this committee. Information regarding the monthly meetings of the Certification and Higher Education Committee is sent to more than 78 people including leaders of teachers associations such as the Maine Association of PE, Health,

Recreation and Dance, Maine Science Teachers Association, and Maine Association of Middle Level Educators. The chair of the PSB is on that list as well.

As part of the feedback process for amending Chapter 115, we have held a series of 5 meetings across the state and over Zoom after normal school hours in addition to the monthly meetings of the Certification and Higher Education Committee where discussions about proposed amendments to Chapter 115 occur.

State Board members have spent literally hundreds of hours in receiving and reviewing feedback, reaching out to educational groups and individuals, responding to comments, and drafting documents. Active practitioners, that is, those still working, would be very hard pressed to devote the kinds of hours we have which we can only do since several of us are retired. And the only support we have for our work is an Office Specialist. We will be depending on the required support of the Maine Department of Education for editing the final version of Chapter 115.

Without a substantial budget and staff support including a director and office specialist, and considering that 12 active, working educator members are needed for a quorum, it is unreasonable to make the Professional Standards Board responsible for the educator certification process.

I am pleased to address any questions you have.

Thank you.