

State of Maine

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Testimony of Dr. Tom Keller, Vice Chair of the State Board of Education and Chair of the Certification and Higher Education Committee

In support of LD 2175 Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 115: The Credentialing of Education Personnel, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Education, State Board of Education

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Sponsored by Representative Kelly Noonan Murphy

Date: February 24, 2026

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 Vice Chair of the Maine State Board of Education and Chair of its Certification and Higher Education (C&HE) Committee. I join you to speak in favor of LD 2175 Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 115: The Credentialing of Education Personnel, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Education, State Board of Education.

On June 16, 2023, the governor signed the Chapter 54 Resolve, Directing the State Board of Education to Study Educator Credential Requirements including but not limited to athletic director qualifications, the industrial arts endorsement, also referred to as "700 certification", potential additional waivers for educators holding certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or for conditional certification extensions due to extenuating circumstances, reciprocity for educators holding out-of-state educator credentials or certification and any other potential revisions the State Board of Education identifies. Further, the resolve, also known as LD 485, specified that the State Board of Education, no later than January 2, 2024, shall submit a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. The report was submitted on time and presented to the Joint Standing Committee on January 23, 2024 and responded to each of the issues identified above.

On March 26, 2024, the governor signed the Chapter 137 Resolve, Directing the State Board of Education to Amend Chapter 115: The Credentialing of Education Personnel, a Major Substantive Rule of the State Board of Education. In addition, amendments to the rule may include, but are not limited to, recommendations included in the State Board of Education's report submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs pursuant to Resolve 2023, chapter 54.

Since the submission of the LD 485 report to the ECA Committee, we have received feedback during each of the monthly C&HE Committee meetings from March, 2024 until October, 2025, held 8 regional feedback sessions from Caribou to Biddeford in October and November, 2024, and reached out to every organization and association of Maine educators we could locate. In addition comments were received from numerous individuals as well.

From September 24, 2025 until October 24, 2025, a public comment period was open regarding the revised Chapter 115. A public hearing was held October 15, 2025. At the public hearing, comments were received from 58 people and organizational representatives and an additional 12 people opted to observe only. Of the 58 comments, almost half were statements in support of the revisions. Those comments are captured in the document titled Statement of Factual and Policy Basis and Summary of Comments/Responses, Maine State Board of Education, 9 January 2026 and are contained in the packet provided to you, thanks to our colleagues at the Maine Department of Education.

Literally hundreds of people have had eyes on this and the Committee has worked for innumerable hours on it in open meeting and sharing drafts. I have 18 iterations of the chapter on my hard drive.

We have had two goals throughout this process - to be transparent and inclusive and to require rigorous preparation while being flexible. We believe we have achieved these goals. However, we are aware of the fact that there are thousands of Maine educators, each with a unique background as well as hundreds of educational systems and circumstances in Maine and writing one set of rules calls for some flexibility and judgment in the application of those rules.

Revisions to this rules chapter include:

#### **Definitions & General Requirements**

- Pre-K (pre-Kindergarten) shall mean a program offered by a public school that provides instruction for children who are four years of age by October 15th and for all three year old children eligible for special education.

#### **Added Pathway for teacher candidates**

- A new "Endorsement Eligibility Pathway 3" has been added to most teaching endorsements, allowing candidates, especially career changers and teachers seeking additional endorsements to earn certification through an approved portfolio process with superintendent/CTE Director, SBE and department approval.

#### **Out-of-State and Out-of-Country Certification**

- Streamlined process for accepting equivalent certificates from other states or countries.
- Requires official transcripts for international coursework and a course-by-course analysis from an approved evaluator.

#### **Educational Technician Certificates**

- Reorganized into Ed Tech I, II, III, and Emergency Ed Tech categories with clearer permitted responsibilities and supervision levels.

Eligibility updates:

- Ed Tech I: high school diploma/GED.

- Ed Tech II: reduced requirement from 60 credits to 48 credits, or 2 years of CTE employment.
  - Ed Tech III: may qualify with 90 semester hours or an approved Maine training program, such as community college “learning facilitator” programs.
  - Emergency Ed Tech: must complete a state-approved program targeting essential skills .
- Certificates are valid for 5 years; renewal requires 3 semester hours of approved study/in-service training per term
  - Certificates issued under reciprocity are valid for five years and renewable in accordance with Maine’s requirements.

### Special Education

- **New Endorsement 286: Teacher of Children with Severe Disabilities (Preschool-Grade 12)**
- **New Endorsement 283: Provider of Early Intervention/Teacher of Children with Disabilities, Birth to Age 5**
- Revised coursework requirements to specify content areas (evaluation/assessment, specially designed instruction, reading instruction with phonemic awareness and phonics)
- Added Educational Technician III to the Teacher pathway for conditional certificates
- Added portfolio pathway options
- Modified grade span renewal option allowing current 282 holders to renew in birth-grade 12 span

### Athletic Director (1.14)

- Added second pathway option
- Added detailed coursework requirements covering legal issues, student athlete wellness, and diversity
- Restructured renewal requirements

### Career and Technical Education (Section 3)

- **New Endorsement 095: Career Development Coordinator in CTE**
- **New Endorsement 096: Student Services Coordinator in CTE**
- Added sixth transitional pathway for those holding current CTE certificates seeking additional endorsements
- Reduced professional certification requirements from 12 to 9 semester hours

While I am certainly willing to go through this line by line, I would like to remind you of the time and effort that literally hundreds of Maine educators have devoted to this set of revisions. This is also a

comprehensive and interconnected document; a seemingly minor change in one part can have profound consequences in other parts. As a reminder, there are 21,183 certified preK-12 classroom teachers teaching every day in Maine along with 8,709 educational technicians, 922 principals and assistant principals, and 519 superintendents and assistant superintendents along with other certified school personnel. Each is a unique individual with often a unique pathway into education. Our rules are meant to accommodate all of these and provide rigorous yet flexible options for local school administrative units.

We therefore ask that if you want to make changes, you suggest those to us and give us time (say two weeks) to consider the changes and to offer our remedies during the work session. We believe the revisions we have proposed are important enough to not delay their implementation by waiting until the next legislative session.

I will attempt to answer questions and will be available for the work session on this bill.

Thank you.