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## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

L.D. 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

February 24, 2026

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Eileen King, Deputy Executive Director of Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association in support of L.D. 2175. At a time when Maine schools are facing a critical workforce shortage, these revised changes would help ease long-existing barriers into the profession and provide new opportunities to provide more supportive, targeted and local professional development. If approved, Maine schools believe these changes would strengthen our profession and lead to educators who are better trained and supported across Maine.

We first want to recognize the work of the State Board of Education, whose members have worked closely throughout the rulemaking process to engage with the field and listen to the needs of Maine educators and schools. The Board has held listening sessions, worked together with school leaders, and have thoughtfully crafted rules that will improve Maine's educator workforce. Among the positive changes:

- Providing multiple pathways for certification and recertification for athletic directors
- Updating language for Pre-K teachers to better align with the transition of FAPE to local districts for 3 to 5 year old's
- In alignment with Rep. Carlow's L.D. 1163, updating the Industrial Arts endorsement to allow for a pathway for those with industry experience to become certified educators
- Creating a new "portfolio pathway" to certification: an optional process through which a local superintendent and team, in a plan approved by the State Board of Education, recognize candidates' experience and provide them with personalized, targeted coursework, professional development, and mentoring to help them succeed in their new role.

The work on developing this portfolio pathway has been ongoing for more than a year, and it comes at a critical time. Maine schools currently face teacher shortages in 17 endorsement areas, from English to Math to Early Childhood Education. Maine schools need good teachers – yet, over and over, administrators run into situations where quality teaching candidates haven't been hired because they've faced barriers in the certification process – from issues with reciprocity to certain college courses not counting towards certification because they weren't named correctly.

For educators changing endorsements or those coming to education from outside of the field, the portfolio pathway opens up a new opportunity for local teams to work together with the candidate, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and develop a plan for certification. This plan – developed collaboratively by a team of administrators, mentor and veteran teachers, and higher education professionals – will include meaningful professional development, mentoring, and targeted college coursework from local universities (instead of out-of-state online courses of uneven quality).

These plans, which must be approved by the State Board of Education and certified by the Maine DOE, will allow for more targeted, focused and meaningful professional development, ensuring rigor and personalization in the certification process while opening the door for more teachers to enter the field.

It is also important to share that we do not believe this new pathway will be used by every district, nor will it be used by the vast majority of aspiring educators. We still expect the vast majority of teachers to become certified after getting their college degree.

This new pathway will instead help complement that work by creating new pathways to certify applicants coming to education from outside of the field, as well as helping current teachers obtain new endorsements if they choose. Every district knows examples of quality candidates who haven't continued in the application process after seeing the overwhelming path ahead of them. These new rules would make that path more manageable – and ensure all candidates have the support and mentoring they need to get there. MSSA and MSBA appreciate that the State Board of Education unanimously supported this new pathway, and we urge your committee to support L.D. 2175 as well.

Thank you, and I am happy to take any questions you might have.