

129th Legislature
Senate of
Maine
Senate District 29

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Chair, Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

*Innovation, Development, Economic
Advancement and Business Committee*

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Good afternoon Representative Kornfield and fellow members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Senator Rebecca Millett, and I represent District 29, South Portland, Cape Elizabeth and part of Scarborough, in the Maine Senate. I am pleased to present LD 898, "An Act To Provide for a Professional Wage and Support for New Educators."

The power of teachers to impact lives is profound. They have the power to inspire. To instill a lifelong love of learning. To teach how to think deeply and critically.

We know that effective teachers bring about greater learning than those with lesser abilities. Studies show a great teacher can impart a year and half worth of learning to a student in one year.[i]

Through LD 898, we have a way to approach recruiting high quality candidates, strengthening competencies, and providing compensation that recognizes and supports education professionals. These steps include:

- Increasing required in classroom experience for teacher prep students
- Raising the minimum grade point average to 3.0 for teacher prep classes
- Providing provisional teachers with baseline observation and feedback opportunities during their probationary periods, and
- Establishing the minimum salary at \$40,000

In a 2016 national survey of college freshmen, the number of students who say they will major in education has reached its lowest point in 45 years. Just 4.2 percent intend to major in education—a typical first step to becoming a teacher. In 2016, on average US teachers earned roughly 60% of what other college graduates earned as compared to high performing countries such as Canada, China, Finland, and Singapore where teachers receive between 90 and 105%.[ii]

Appallingly average teacher salary adjusted for inflation decreased from 2010 to 2016 in 39 states including Maine (see graph). In addition, Maine has a roughly 10% gap between average teacher salary and the family living wage.[iii]

Today Arizona, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Nevada and New Mexico and numerous other states are struggling to find qualified teachers and are experiencing massive teacher shortages. Many are relying on long-term substitutes and non-certified employees to fill the gap.

In Maine, nearly 1/3 of our teachers are 55 or older so that in the next 5-7 years, thousands of Maine educators are going to retire.

Today we already have teacher shortages in:

- Industrial arts,
- Mathematics,
- Science,
- Special Education, and
- World Languages and more.

This will get worse if we persist in ignoring the problem and do nothing.

Maine's average starting teacher salary ranks 33rd in the country and dead last in New England and the entire Northeast.

Without action, Maine is poised to be the next New Mexico, Wisconsin or Arizona.

This doesn't have to be a foregone conclusion. We can join our colleagues in South Dakota who increased their teacher salary in 2016 AND; Alabama which supported their teachers with a raise in 2016 AND; Utah which invested an additional \$40 million in their teacher salaries AND; Idaho legislators who invested in increasing teacher salaries with a \$125 million appropriation.

Problems rarely are solved by one answer. Paying our teachers a professional wage is an important step, but the looming teacher shortage is complex and challenging and must be addressed from multiple angles. This past January, Maryland's Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education released its final recommendations which included a comprehensive approach to attracting highly qualified high school graduates into teacher careers, raising licensure standards and bringing teacher pay up to the level of high-status professions. In addition to addressing the gross undervaluation of Maine's teachers, this bill strengthens student teaching experience and academic achievement requirements for a teacher certificate. The bill increases the number of hours of practicum and clarifies that the in-classroom experience begins in a meaningful time frame to allow students optimal space to reflect on their suitability for the classroom.

LD 898 also increases the GPA requirement for teacher prep courses.

It strengthens the support systems required to provide assistance for teachers that are in their first years of teaching and improves incentives to teachers to assume the role of mentor and take on the significant extra workload required.

I would like to amend my bill by removing section 11 as there is a bill in front of IDEA Committee that addresses this aspect of growing our teacher workforce.

Lee Iacocca said “in a completely rational society, the best of us would be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something else.” How is that possible when starting teacher salaries are so uncompetitive? Maine’s low starting salary discourages students from entering teacher preparation programs.

Our low starting salary often forces our teachers to take 2nd and sometimes 3rd jobs to make ends meet, when we would rather they focus their energies on inspiring and educating our children.

Low starting salaries impact the lifetime earnings for teachers which, in turn, negatively impacts our state economy. And low starting salaries will surely exacerbate a looming teacher shortage. The time to show how we value our teachers and respect their contributions to our communities and our state is now.

Maine’s 2016 Teacher of the Year Talya Edlund shared with me the following quote, “Don’t tell me what you value, show me your budget and I’ll tell you what you value.”

Please join me in supporting LD 898 so we can show our teachers we value them as the life-changing professionals they are. Thank you for your time. I would be happy to take any questions.

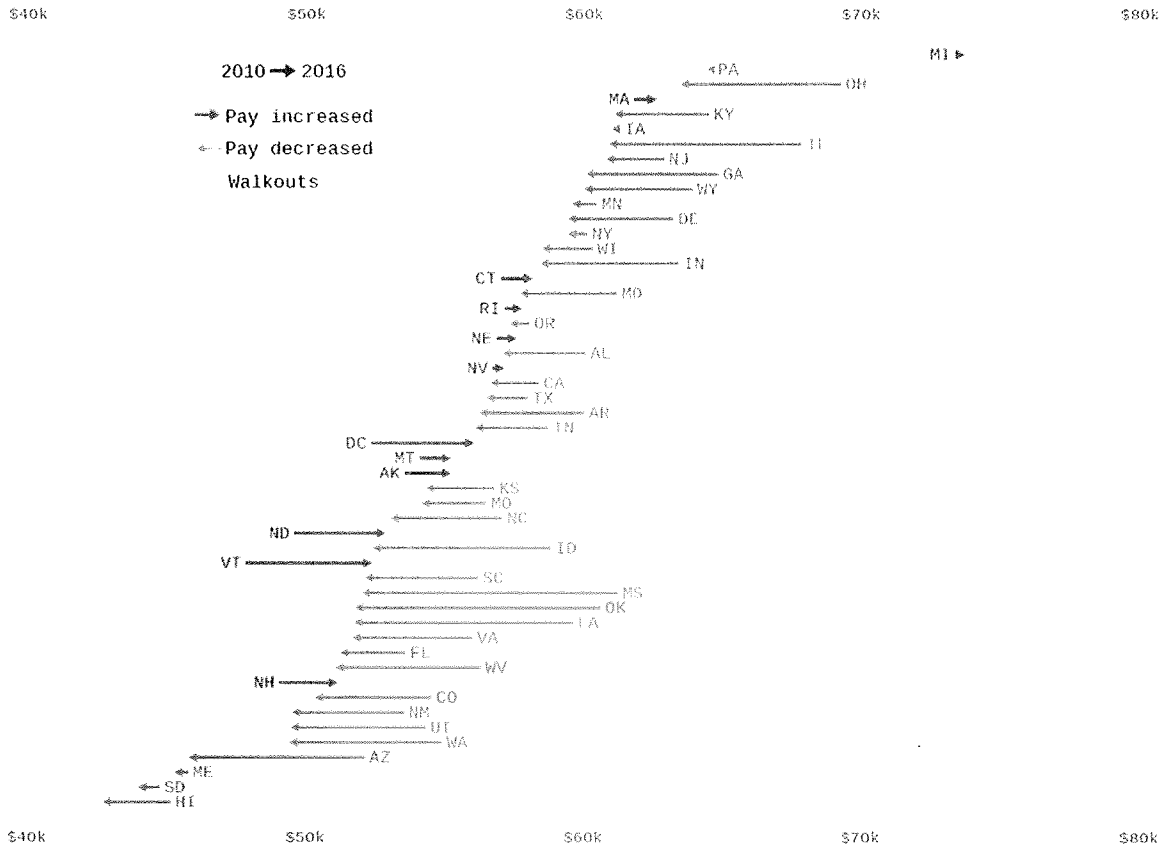
[i] “Valuing Teachers: How Much is a Good Teacher Worth?”, Eric Hanushek, 2011, Stanford Hoover Institute, <http://hanushek.stanford.edu/publications/valuing-teachers-how-much-good-teacher-worth>

[ii] “Paying Teachers What They’re Worth”, Crew, Jennifer, National Center on Education, <http://ncee.org/2019/02/paying-teachers-what-theyre-worth/>.

[iii] “Low Teacher Salaries 101”, Katz, Nicole et al., Education Resource Strategies, https://www.erstrategies.org/tap/low_teacher_salaries_101

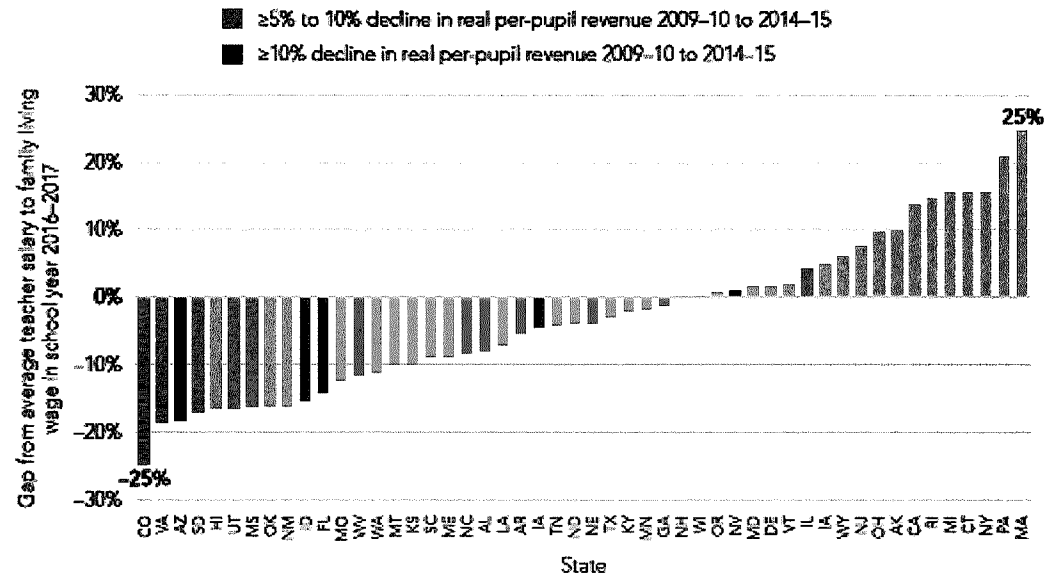
Change in teacher salary, 2010-16

Ranked by 2016 salary: Cost of living adjusted Actual dollars



Data: [National Center for Education Statistics](#), [The Council for Community and Economic Research](#); Note: Estimated average annual salary of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools, adjusted for inflation; Chart: Andrew Witherspoon/Axios

Gap between the average teacher salary and the family living wage in each state in the school year 2016-17



Source: ERS analysis using data from NCES Table 211.60. Estimated average annual salary of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools, by state: Selected years, 1989-70 through 2016-17; MIT Living Wage Calculator <http://livingwage.mit.edu/>; NCES Elementary and Secondary Information System, Revenue per pupil by source 1987-88 through 2013-14; NCES Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2014-15 (Fiscal Year 2015); NCES Table 106.70. Gross domestic product price index, Consumer Price Index, education price indexes, and federal budget composite deflator: Selected years, 1919 through 2015