



The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Dolly Sullivan, Educate Maine

In Support of

L.D. 1188

An Act To Include Librarians and Career and Technical Education Teachers in the Minimum \$40,000 Salary Initiative

April 12, 2021

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Dolly Sullivan. I am a Program Director at Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization. I live in Bucksport, Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of L.D. 1188.

Educate Maine's mission is to ensure that Maine people are prepared to succeed in education and career and that all Maine people reach their highest educational potential. Teachers are one of the most influential factors in an individual's lifelong educational attainment.

So, how does one define "teacher"? I know there is a State Board of Education definition of 'teacher' in Chapter 115, Section 2.20. For eligibility for County and State Teacher of the Year, we define a teacher as one who holds the appropriate professional certification for their position; is employed by a public school, including public charter school, a publicly supported (aka 60% school); and is actively teaching students at least 50% of full time. Librarians and CTE teachers are included in that criteria. We know that both of these professional classifications are key personnel in our schools and have profound impact on students.

Having these teacher classifications included in the \$40,000 minimum salary will increase the likelihood of attracting high achieving individuals to the profession in all areas of our state. For many districts this is not an issue, but for some it is. We can't allow this to be a regional equity issue.

As the State Coordinator for the Maine Teacher of the Year program and an administrator of the Education Leaders Experience, I'm privileged to work with some of Maine's most remarkable educators. They are the experts, so once again, we reached out to those in both networks who best understand these educator classifications to get their feedback on LD 1188. The following are their direct words:

Career and Technical Education Teachers:

- “CTE instructors are often tradespeople who make considerably higher salaries than teachers but choose to come to education to share their expertise. We know there is a skills gap in our nation and CTE programs help address this need. We should be INCREASING recruitment efforts for CTE instructors by offering them wages and benefits that entice them to come to our centers and to stay. As you are aware, most instructors have paid into social security and will likely lose that benefit as well. “
- “Career and Technical Education teachers are a rare entity without additional boundaries. An individual seeking employment as a teacher directly from industry is already asked to meet many certification requirements, and generally take a reduction in pay to train our youth for professions that are an integral part of the workforce in Maine.

When posting an open teaching position for CTE, it is not uncommon to only receive one, if any, qualified applicants. In fact, in recent years Bath Tech was forced to put our electrical program on hold after posting twice and receiving no qualified applicants. It is important that we offer new CTE teachers fair salaries as an incentive to change professions”.

- “In the Southern Maine area, 40K is a pretty typical starting pay. If I read it correctly the State would provide the additional monies to bring a teacher to 40,000... is that right? If so, then it certainly is a no-brainer. I guess I just wonder how this might impact rural school districts as they have less property/business tax revenue if they were to make up the difference for several teachers with such tight budgets.”

Librarians:

- “As you've mentioned, librarians are defined as education specialists and as such librarians are not known as teachers. However, this is a very skewed perspective. Of course, there are some generalizations but most librarian positions are unique to the school and district. In some cases, the librarian is also a regular staff teacher or is the “go to” sub when there are shortages but in most cases, especially in the lower grades librarians are teaching students everyday as part of Allied Arts/Specials. In this role the librarian teaches everyday which includes planning lessons, creating scope and sequences and following district library curriculum.

I also want to note that to be a librarian in most states and definitely in Maine, it is required to have not only a Bachelor's degree, but also 36 Graduate semester hours in Library Science. So this is essentially a Master's and for many librarians that is the case. For me, I already had earned my Master's so I chose to take the required courses in a graduate program but not earn another Master's to save money (I had two children in

college while I was completing the requirements)! This educational requirement is more than what is required to be credentialed as a teacher in Maine. One could argue that a librarian is more educated than a "teacher" by virtue of the educational requirement. And, as such, compensation should be the same as given to teachers."

Educate Maine is proud to include in our testimony this statement from the **Maine Association of School Libraries** submitted by the organization's Advocacy Chair, Iris Eichenlaub, 2017 Knox County Teacher of the Year. Iris serves as the Library Media Specialist and Technology Integrator at Camden Hills Regional High School. During the selection process this is how her principal described her role: "Her work with students has radically transformed the Library to a place where students want to be. Her work in the classroom, working with teachers and students on both long and short term projects, units and book reads, has created a role for herself as a valuable resource for learning".

- "The Maine Association of School Libraries supports LD 1188 - to include school librarians in the minimum \$40,000 salary initiative. School librarians are essential personnel in Maine schools who teach students and serve teachers and families, and, as such, deserve to be compensated at the minimum salary as classroom teachers. School librarians are teachers and curriculum leaders who mentor their colleagues and keep them informed about professional developments, best practices, and advances in education and technology. Furthermore, school librarians work with all of the students in the school and support their varied needs and interests. Highly trained professional school librarians are well-equipped to help their school communities uphold the civic standards of equitable access to educational resources (including digital), intellectual freedom, and ethical use of information. In a world where misinformation spreads through social media at an alarming rate and with dire consequences, the work that trained school librarians do to develop informed citizens is crucial to the health of our democracy.

Salaries need to be competitive enough to attract and retain high quality professionals to serve Maine students in all districts in our state. After reading these compelling statements, I hope you agree that Librarians and Career and Technical Education teachers are an integral sector of Maine's teacher workforce and have a tremendous impact on our students. Please acknowledge that importance by voting to include them in the \$40,000 minimum salary initiative with your support of LD 1188.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to put you in contact with any of these educators.

Best regards
Dolly Sullivan
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