

Testimony of Simon West for The Maine State Chamber of Commerce 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, and members of the Committee On Education and Cultural Affairs

My name is Simon West from Gardiner and I represent the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, a statewide business organization made up of both large and small businesses, here to provide you with our written testimony in support of L.D. 1188, An Act To Include Librarians and Career and Technical Education Teachers in the Minimum \$40,000 Salary Initiative

The Maine State Chamber stands behind legislation that supports the teaching profession, the quality of education, and helps to advance the skills and size of our workforce. We understand the benefits of paying teachers higher wages and that is why there is an effort to do so. It increases the supply of teachers, reduces turnover, keeps top education graduates in the teaching field, stops our teachers from needing second jobs, and improves student performance. Career and Technical Education teachers should be included in the salary initiative. With the known benefits gained from reasonable increases to teacher's pay, it makes good sense to also extend this initiative to all educators regardless of subject matter. As a state we should pay special attention to teachers whose focus area is to foster students who will potentially fill jobs in trade and technical occupations. Maine desperately needs to fill that workforce. This bill will give us an opportunity to not just fill it but give those students a better education and greater career potential. An equitable wage increase for these teachers will, as it does for other subject areas, increase the number of teachers and keep the most qualified teachers in their position longer. It will also inspire more students to pursue this education and make those students more prepared for life after school.

While working to reduce workforce gaps in trades is a primary concern at the Chamber, I do want to touch upon Librarians. According to Maine's DOE, Librarians need either to have a bachelor's degree with 36 credit hours in a graduate program of Library Science or to have a bachelor's degree and a valid Maine teaching certificate. A recent report showed that among even the lowest paying master's degrees (graduate programs) \$40,000 is low. Librarians' education should be recognized and supported. If Librarians without master's degrees are

required to have a teaching certificate it seems appropriate that they should earn relatively equal pay for having equal qualifications.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our written testimony.