



Maine Education Association

Grace Leavitt President | Jesse Hargrove Vice President | Beth French Treasurer
Rebecca Cole NEA Director | Rachelle Bristol Executive Director

Testimony

Neither for Nor Against

LD 1018: An Act to Increase the Membership of the State Board of Education and Review the Board's Responsibilities, Functions, and Staffing

Mallory Cook, Director of Training and Early Educator Engagement,

Maine Education Association

Before the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

March 9, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and other esteemed members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Mallory Cook (pronouns she/her/hers), and I am the Director of Training and Early Educator Engagement at the Maine Education Association. I am a certified English teacher and Building Administrator. I am writing to provide testimony on behalf of the MEA neither for nor against LD 1018: An Act to Increase the Membership of the State Board of Education and Review the Board's Responsibilities, Functions, and Staffing.

Since taking on this role in September, I have attended hundreds of meetings focused on the crisis in front of us – the educator shortage. While all stakeholder groups work to include both qualitative and quantitative data in these discussions, it is incredibly frustrating when these conversations happen in the absence of educators. This is especially true when it comes to Maine's State Board of Education and committees. MEA supports the addition of a seat on the State Board, but we also think it is essential that this seat, and others, be held by practicing educators, a practice already happening in at least 14 other states. It is certainly important that we have the wisdom of former educators on the board, but they are unable to give first-hand accounts of the issues in our schools today.

Section 3 of the legislation before you calls for a Working Group to review the responsibilities, functions, and staffing of the State Board of Education. We would hope the Working Group could include a discussion about the timing of their meetings to maximize participation from educators and the public and to allow working educators to serve on the State Board of Education without needing to miss classroom time. At present, meetings begin at 9 and go well into the afternoon hours. Committee meetings also take place mid-morning. Such timing, while convenient for those working outside of education, is an incredible barrier and injustice to the people whom this board seeks to serve.

Should the Committee choose to move forward with this bill, we believe voice should be given to those who do not already have the audience nor the platform the Teacher of the Year has embedded in their

35 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330 | 1349 Broadway, Bangor, ME 04401
7 Hatch Drive, Suite 220, Caribou, ME 04736 | 29 Christopher Toppi Drive, South Portland ME 04106

207-622-5866 | 207-888-2070 fax | www.mainea.org



Maine Education Association

Grace Leavitt President | Jesse Hargrove Vice President | Beth French Treasurer
Rebecca Cole NEA Director | Rachelle Bristol Executive Director

role. Assigning this seat to Teacher of the Year also leaves out the potential for the important voices of our Education Support Professionals, who experience unique challenges within schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I welcome you to reach out with any questions.

35 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330 | 1349 Broadway, Bangor, ME 04401
7 Hatch Drive, Suite 220, Caribou, ME 04736 | 29 Christopher Toppi Drive, South Portland ME 04106

207-622-5866 | 207-888-2070 fax | www.maineea.org