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Westbrook  
LD 1018

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In Support of L.D. 1018 - "An Act to Increase the Membership of the State Board of Education and Review the Board's Responsibilities, Functions, and Staffing"

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

In 2014, I had the great honor of serving as the Maine Teacher of the Year. As part of my year of service I presented to the State Board of Education. During that meeting, I was introduced to the members of the board, including the two students representatives. I have to say that I was shocked that there was no one on the board that represented what was currently happening on the ground in school, a practicing teacher.

Flash forward to some of the national events I was able to attend during my year of service. One colleague in particular, the 2014 Arkansas Teacher of the Year, was discussing how he would be serving on his State Board of Education. We got into a long conversation about the importance of having a practitioner serving on the board and sharing a perspective on the impact of decisions.

I am so pleased to see LD #1018 - "An Act to Increase the Membership of the State Board of Education and Review the Board's Responsibilities, Functions, and Staffing" discussed at a public hearing this week. In my opinion, the bill provides two important ideas that should be implemented: 1). adding a current or former State Teacher of the Year to the State Board AND directing the Department of Education to establish a working group of stakeholders and other interested parties to review the responsibilities, functions and staffing of the State Board of Education.

The Maine State Board of Education acts in an advisory capacity to the Commissioner of Education in matters concerning state education laws and makes education policy recommendations to the legislative and executive branches of state government. How can this be happening without a teacher at the table to share vital information about what is actually happening in classrooms across the state? The voices of educators will be critical as we face a crisis over the next decade, attracting and retaining teachers. This is one step to address this.

I vigorously support this legislation and hope that all committee members will see the value in adding this important voice to our State Board. Thank you for consideration of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Karen MacDonald  
2014 Maine Teacher of the Year  
Westbrook, Maine