



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

PENDER MAKIN
COMMISSIONER

March 28, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Senate Chair
Representative Brennan, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 335, An Act to Improve Educator Certification Response Times, proposes to establish five Ed Specialist III positions within the Department of Education (DOE) dedicated to reducing response times for educator certification.

The certification team in the Department of Education is a part of the Office of Higher Education and Educator Support Services (OHEESS). In addition to certification evaluation and support, the office also includes staff who focus on educator workforce development initiatives as well as educator recognition and retention.

OHEESS is currently processing incoming applications on a three-week turnaround. Candidates for certification submit a completed application and relevant documents through the Maine Educational Informational System (MEIS). From there, certification evaluators review the application and send the applicant either a notice of successful certification (with conditional or full professional status) or a letter detailing any area(s) in which the application does not yet conform with the requirements for certification.

The certification team currently comprises of three Education Specialist III positions, four Office Specialist positions, and an Office Manager. Education Specialist IIIs evaluate applications while Office Specialists handle incoming phone calls and emails about certification, criminal history background checks, and fingerprinting. These positions work collaboratively and meet daily to discuss certification policy in general as well as specific applicant issues.

The certification team also collaborates more broadly within OHEESS, helping workforce development staff understand certification questions and supporting applicants by connecting them with recruitment/retention resources. Our office is often the first interaction aspiring educators have with DOE; through the collaboration of the certification team with educator support staff, we can aid in the retention of these educators throughout their careers in Maine.

Adding new positions to support educator certification and workforce development will thus serve Maine's schools and students well. Dictating the placement and title of the new positions

proposed by LD 335, however, may restrict the DOE from balancing the composition of the Office of Higher Education and Educator Support Services to the evolving needs of Maine's educators. The flexibility to assign these positions to support certification applicants as well as educator workforce development, retention, and recognition activities more broadly would allow OHEESS to support the field all the more in the years to come.

The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 335 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:


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Michael Perry

Acting Director of Higher Education & Educator Support Services

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Acting Director of the Office of Higher Education and
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