



Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities

Neither For Nor Against LD 1314: An Act to Establish a Minimum Salary for Educational Specialists, Educational Technicians and School Teaching Professionals

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Gay Anne McDonald and I am the Executive Director for the Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities. On behalf of the MADSEC Legislative Committee, I am providing testimony neither for nor against LD 1314.

MADSEC supports increased wages for support staff and values the work of all school personnel. We understand that Maine, as well as the country, is facing a critical workforce shortage, especially in the field of special education, and that an adjustment must be made to recruit and retain school personnel. Furthermore, we believe that beyond pay, school support staff, particularly educational technicians, often feel unprepared for the job in front of them and that providing education and training, such as the Learning Facilitator Program provided through Eastern Maine Community College would have a positive impact in the recruitment and retention of school support staff.

We do have concerns with LD 1314 as written and the significant financial impact and possible unintended consequences should it pass. Increasing the minimum hourly wage to an amount equal to 200% of the minimum hourly wage established in Title 26, section 664, subsection 1 beginning in SY 2024-2025 at such a high rate, and without financial assistance and an incremental approach would result in many school districts, especially small, rural districts, having to make programming and/or personnel cuts in order to balance their budget to meet this requirement. This would result in less programs and staff, which is not in the best interest of students. Such a significant increase could also result in a lack of recruitment and retention of certified teachers as a 200% increase would result in an income close to the teacher minimum salary of \$40,000.

LD 1314 does not take into consideration the different Educational Technician levels (I, II, III) nor years of experience. Such a significant increase would result in school districts struggling to increase hourly rates across the board in order to honor those individuals with greater educational or work experience. For example, an increase in the minimum hourly wage to approximately \$27.60 could result in a new hire as an Educational Technician I with a high school diploma and no years of experience earning the same or very similar to an Educational Technician I with several years of experience or an Educational Technician III with 90 semester hours of education or completion of a highly intensive training program.

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MADSEC supports a wage increase for all school personnel, however, for these reasons cannot fully support LD 1314. The inclusion of an incremental wage increase and funding assistance to school districts would greatly help in the support of this bill.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state.

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