



Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities

Support of LD 1608: An Act to Address Teacher Shortages Through Financial Assistance and Career Advancement Opportunities

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 in support of LD 1608: An Act to Address Teacher Shortages Through Financial Assistance and Career Advancement Opportunities.

As Maine faces a critical shortage of teachers across the state, especially in the field of special education, MADSEC supports the allocation of funds for eligible students, however, would recommend that the cap of \$8,000 per academic year under the Educators for Maine Program be removed in the event that financial assistance greater than \$8,000 is available to eligible students. We strongly support the expenditure and disbursement of funds for the hiring of education students participating in a teacher residency program administered by the University of Southern Maine that seeks to address teacher shortages in the State by connecting postsecondary education students with teaching positions while the students continue to take classes to fulfill the students' degree or certification requirements. It's our greatest hope that the University of Southern Maine Teacher Residency Program includes individuals seeking a teaching degree in the field of special education given the current state of need.

As a former general education teacher, special education teacher, and special education administrator, I know firsthand that the first several years of teaching come with a steep learning curve and without appropriate preparation and ongoing support, many new teachers leave the field. Teacher Residency programs positively support and prepare pre-service teachers in best instructional practices, content knowledge, and field experience, providing them with the needed skills, mentorship, and hands-on experience to enter the profession well-prepared, while assisting with defraying costs for the individual.

MADSEC appreciates the time and effort spent by the University of Southern Maine staff and other stakeholders to establish a Teacher Residency Program and highly encourages them to include individuals seeking an educational degree in special education, and for the University of Maine System to work collaboratively in an effort to provide such programs throughout the state to best support the critical workforce shortage of teachers across the state.

MADSEC encourages the Committee to vote 'ought to pass' on LD 1608 and thanks you for your time, consideration, and service to our state.

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