

DATE: April 20, 2023
TO: Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs
FROM: Dr. Lauren Stark, Policy Engagement Fellow for the Scholars Strategy Network,
Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Maine at Augusta, Advisory Board Member
for the Maine Teacher Residency
Email & phone number
RE: **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 & Cultural Affairs:

I am writing to you today in support of LD 1608.

My name is Lauren Stark, and I am a policy engagement fellow for the Scholars Strategy Network, an assistant professor of education at the University of Maine at Augusta, and an advisory board member for the Maine Teacher Residency. My perspectives do not necessarily represent those of my institutional affiliations.

As a teacher educator and field placement director at the University of Maine at Augusta, I have worked with my colleagues to support teacher candidates as they work full-time in schools. This has included negotiating individualized Memorandums of Understanding and Alternative Placement Plans for the over 50% of our teacher candidates who are working in schools. The Maine Teacher Residency program has substantially supported these efforts, providing tuition remission for teacher candidates and significant stipends and training for mentor teachers.

The Maine Teacher Residency Program follows best practices within national research on teacher residencies. We know from this research that residencies provide financial support for students, support their professional development, increase recruitment and retention, improve teacher preparation and teacher quality, and increase academic support for PK-12 students (Guha, Hyler, & Darling Hammond, 2016). While it will be important to measure concrete successes of this program within the state, I have seen the program support each of these goals in my work with MTR teacher residents and mentor teachers.

This program addresses some of the significant financial barriers that teacher candidates face on their pathway toward certification. It addresses educational technician and teacher shortages by supporting well-prepared educators to fill open positions as they complete their certification. Likewise, it facilitates “grow your own” models by enabling educational technicians to continue working in schools as they complete their certification. It also supports experienced educators by offering a more substantial stipend than is possible through approved teacher education programs, building community among experienced educators and deepening their practice as mentors. My hope is that this will support teacher retention and create pathways for career advancement for excellent educators without requiring them to leave the classroom.

I welcome the opportunity to speak with legislators about LD 1608 and urge members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs to support this act.