

Testimony in Support of LD 1265, LD 1539, and LD 1744

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, members of the State and Local Government Committee. My name is Gladys Robinson, and I work for the EUT at Edmunds School in Washington County. I am sharing testimony on my own personal time. I am here to request your support for LD 1265 (An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Public Employee Market Pay Studies and Comprehensive Reviews of the Classification Plan for State Service Positions), LD 1539 (An Act to Create a State Employee Compensation Stabilization Fund) and LD 1744 (An Act to Modify Provisions of the State Civil Service System Governing Employee Recruitment and Retention).

I am currently employed as a teacher aide (I am licensed as an Ed. Tech 3) and have been in this position for 8 years. Before working full time here, I was a substitute teacher on my days off while working a full-time job as a business owner. I add this comment to let you know how much I enjoy my job educating middle school students. I have seen many coworkers come and go over the years, and most have taken jobs at other local schools. Here are a few of the top reasons for seeking employment elsewhere:

Insurance costs- One of the biggest reasons hourly employees leave our school is because the State of Maine does not offer a competitive benefits package. For example: hourly employees are not given the option to have their pay spread throughout the summer months. This means that health insurance policies are cancelled unless we choose to pick up the tab at a cost of over \$2,300 (for just two months of individual policy during the summer). This is a heavy financial burden, and other school districts in our area pay for health insurance coverage throughout the year for ed techs. I have advocated for this change for 5 years in the EUT to no avail. Please offer year-round insurance coverage for all EUT employees.

Job classification (job title)- When I was hired, I wrote "Ed.Tech" as my job title on my timecard. A few years ago, I was told that I had to write "teacher aide" on that line. Classifying employees as teacher aides rather than ed. techs excludes EUT staff members from qualifying for the state-wide pay increase which goes into effect on June 30, 2025. This can be referenced in 20-A Chapter 201 4016 sections 1-3. This bill ensures that all ed. techs in Maine (excepting EUT schools due to the job classification loophole) earn 125% of minimum wage. That pay increase will put all other schools' ed tech pay at a significantly higher rate than teacher aide pay at EUT schools. Our low pay already makes it difficult to retain current and recruit new employees, and I am fearful for the staffing shortage we will face after June. How can the State of Maine make a rule for "all" educational institutions and not follow that very law themselves? Please help us get our job classification fixed by changing it from from teacher aide to ed. Tech by passing LD 1265.

I thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing feedback and seeing positive results from this meeting. We absolutely need to level the playing field if we are going to retain our current staff and recruit new members to our team. Our school is one of the best in the area as it is filled with caring educators who hold the best interests of our students at heart. I hope that all of them choose to return next year, and I hope that you can help make that a reality by resolving these issues. Please support LD 1265, LD 1539, and LD 1744.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Gladys Robinson
Teacher Aide