

# LIVE UNITED



## Testimony in Support of LD 67 - An Act to Increase the Number of Educational Professionals by Accepting Out-of-state Certification

February 16, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Rebecca Alfredson, and I am the Director of Education at United Way of Southern Maine (UWSM). I am here today on behalf of United Way of Southern Maine to express our support for LD 67, a bill that would increase the number of educational professionals by accepting out-of-state certification.

I am here today as a representative of United Way of Southern Maine, but also because I have a deep personal connection to this matter. I began my career as a teacher when I graduated from Stonehill College in 2015, but I did not have a traditional entrance into the field. Rather than majoring in education, my course of study was interdisciplinary – combining courses I took while studying abroad in the UK, interning in Washington, D.C., and taking classes in everything from economics to sociology. I ended with a degree in “Community Transformation,” and upon graduation, I joined an AmeriCorps program called Teach for America and placed in the Providence, RI region.

In preparation for teaching, I received direct instruction experience as well as ongoing training that was delivered in partnership with the University of Rhode Island. I took and passed all required PRAXIS exams, attended conferences, and received weekly coaching and feedback – all of which culminated in a Rhode Island state teaching certification.

After teaching elementary school for several years, my family and I relocated home to Maine at the height of the pandemic. I was eager to bring the skills that I had learned and honed during my time as a teacher to the deserving students of Maine. However, the hurdles to transferring my out-of-state license were high. I received a list of all the coursework I would need to complete within the next year to become a certified teacher – this essentially amounted to another bachelor’s degree. With my family growing, I did not have the necessary time or financial resources to devote to this endeavor and instead made the incredibly difficult decision to leave the profession.

It is imperative at this moment to improve the accessibility of the teaching profession in Maine. More than 1,300 teachers, educators, technicians, administrators, and other educators in Maine left their jobs. When surveyed, more than half of Maine teachers (55%) mentioned they were considering leaving the field altogether, with an unmanageable workload cited as the central reason for this consideration.<sup>1</sup>

Vacancies in all types of school-based positions are piling up, and administrators across the State are weighing their options for next school year about whether they will have enough staff to open their doors. Streamlining our licensure system to include out-of-state certification

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, Hawes, Olson. Maine Education Policy Research Institute. Oct, 2020.

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reciprocity has the potential to attract more teachers to our great State—but at a minimum, it would eliminate the existing barrier that keeps teachers who have relocated to Maine from continuing in the profession.

Education is a critical vehicle to advancing Thrive2027's Goals 1 and 2. Thrive2027 is a community initiative that comprises more than 300 community partners that include some of the largest businesses, nonprofit organizations, and municipalities in the state. This broad range of community members across all sectors work to achieve three 10-year goals – (1) to give kids a strong start; (2) to empower neighbors to thrive – not just survive; and (3) to help us all live longer, and better.

United Way of Southern Maine supports LD 67 because Maine students deserve experienced teachers, even if their pathways into and through the profession are unconventional, to help them be reading at grade level by end of grade three and then graduate high school ready for their next step.

For these reasons we respectfully encourage you to support and pass LD 67 – Maine's future teachers and their students will benefit.

Thank you for your leadership and service.